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ABSTRACT

The Project on Research Utilization in Social Work Education established in 1976 is described. There are eight chapters to the report. Chapter 1 describes the project. The broad goals of the project were to: (1) analyze the dynamics of research utilization in social work; (2) identify the obstacles to research utilization, especially those that may exist in social work education; and (3) recommend ways of achieving effective research in social work. Chapter 2 reviews the development of research curricula in a number of social work degree programs over the decade ending with 1979. Chapter 3 identifies five models of research in social work and analyzes their implications for social work education. An initial report of a survey of social work students designed to have students describe what they know and think about research is presented in chapter 4. Chapter 5 analyzes nine innovative approaches to research instruction in social work education and considers their implications for research preparation in social work. Chapter 6 summarizes some of the major themes that emerged in the project's regional conferences. Qualitative research methods are discussed in chapter 7. The final chapter discusses project recommendations. (Author/RM)

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Research Utilization in Social Work Education

edited by

Scott Briar, Harold Weissman, and Allen Rubin

Major Articles and Final Recommendations

of the Project on Research Utilization in Social Work Education

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FOREWORD

The Council on Social Work Education is pleased to present its final document in the series "Research Utilization in Social Work Education." This is the culmination of a project established in 1976 by the Council with support from the National Institute of Mental Health. We are deeply indebted to the authors who contributed articles to this final volume as well as to the many individuals who actively participated in the project, including an outstanding advisory committee.

We hope that this collection of materials will be well-utilized in the ongoing effort to enhance the quality of social work education in the nation.

New York City
June 1981

Arthur J. Katz

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THE PROJECT ON RESEARCH UTILIZATION IN SOCIAL WORK EDUCATION

SCOTT BRIAR

In an age of accountability, the extent to which social work, or any profession, uses the tools and results of research in shaping its practices can be expected to have a profound impact on the profession's growth and development. The profession that bases its credibility on faith or ideology alone will have a hard time, even though believers and followers can sustain their efforts for a time. Although a research-generated empirical knowledge base does not guarantee the effectiveness or public acceptance of a profession, the absence of such a base and of vigorous efforts to expand it will, in the long run, erode the profession's credibility.

In recognition of this reality, in 1976 the Council on Social Work Education (CSWE) established a Project on Research Utilization in Social Work Education. The project was supported by a grant from the National Institute of Mental Health. The broad goals of the project were to (1) analyze the dynamics of research utilization in social work, (2) identify the obstacles to research utilization, especially those that may exist in social work education, and (3) recommend ways of achieving effective research utilization in social work.

This volume is the concluding report of the project. Two previous reports, *Sourcebook on Research Utilization* and *Teaching Social Work Research: Alternative Programs and Strategies*, contain materials on various aspects of the project.[1]

THE PROJECT PLAN

The project initially operated under the direction of Aaron Rosenblatt, who served as director for the first half of the project and then left to accept another position. He was succeeded by Allen Rubin, who served as director until the end of the project. Much of the credit for the achievements of the project must be given to the imaginative and effective leadership of Rosenblatt and Rubin. In addition, the work of the project was guided throughout by an advisory committee consisting of educators, researchers, and practitioners.

The major work of the project consisted of six subprojects:

1. The identification and description of selected educational programs related to research utilization in social work. Seventeen such programs in schools of social work and educational programs across the country were selected for study, and nine of them eventually were described in detail.[2] This volume includes an analysis of these programs.

2. A survey of social work students to determine their knowledge of research and attitudes toward it. The first report of that survey is published in this volume.

3. A National Conference on Research Utilization in Social Work Education convened in October 1977 in New Orleans. The papers presented at the conference were published in a previous report issued by the project.[3]

4. A replication of the 1972 survey of the MSW research curriculum conducted by the Council on Social Work Education. A report of this study is presented in this volume.

5. Four regional conferences--in the East, West, Midwest, and Southwest--conducted for research and practice faculty. This volume contains a review of these conferences, which attracted more than 250 faculty members and practitioners.

6. A set of recommendations formulated by the project's Advisory Committee on the basis of the conferences and studies conducted as part of the project. These recommendations are presented in the last chapter of this volume.

OVERVIEW

In Chapter 2, Allen Rubin and Sidney Zimbalist review the development of research curricula in a number of social work degree programs over the decade ending with 1979. Drawing on their replication of CSWE's 1972 survey of MSW research curricula, Rubin and Zimbalist emphasize two important points. The first is that although schools of social work say they attach greater importance to research and have more ambitious research objectives for their students than they did in 1972, few devote more time to research in the MSW curriculum and some devote less, thus raising the question of whether the increased commitment to research is more than verbal.

The second point is that practitioners have developed a narrow conception of what research is, and therefore do not always recognize it when they see it. A good example is that many practitioners erroneously believe that the word "empirical" refers only to quantitative research, whereas it actually refers to research in which data--qualitative or quantitative--are evaluated. However, Rubin and Zimbalist found among the schools widespread expressions of commitment to the integration of research into other parts of the curriculum. This commitment, if it can be implemented, has positive implications for the future of the profession.

Aaron Rosenblatt, in Chapter 3, identifies five models of research in social work and analyzes their implications for social work education. These models, most of which are identifiable in the descriptions of social work programs obtained by the project, vary mainly according to the degree of integration attempted between research and practice. As Rosenblatt indicates, some professionals believe that the roles of practitioner and researcher are incompatible in some fundamental respects and therefore cannot and should not be fully integrated. Others recognize the valid difference between these roles in their pure form, but do not see these differences as incompatible and feel they can and indeed have been integrated in the same persons. This debate, no doubt, will continue.

An initial report of a survey of social work students designed to describe what they know and think about research is presented in Chapter 4. The findings reported by Kirk and Rosenblatt are informative and deserve careful study by social work educators. Other reports based on this survey are expected to be published in the future.

As noted earlier, the project obtained descriptions of nine innovative approaches to research instruction in social work education, and these descriptions were reported in a previous volume prepared by the project.[4] In Chapter 5, Robert Weinbach analyzes these programs and considers their implications for research preparation in social work. The variations in research instruction among the nine programs identify a number of options for schools to follow according to their specific predilections and resources. As Weinbach appropriately observes, the variations raise at least as many questions as they answer. Nevertheless, the wide variations described clearly indicate efforts to develop and test bold and imaginative new approaches to the problem of integrating research into the preparation of practitioners for a profession that traditionally has been ambivalent about research.

Another strong indication of the interest in research utilization among social work educators was the large number of educators and practitioners who attended the regional conferences sponsored by the project. In Chapter 6, Rubin summarizes some of the major themes that emerged in these conferences. He notes that the issue which drew the most interest in all the conferences was the value and limitations of single-subject research designs. Advocates of these designs were accused of presenting them as a panacea, but detractors sometimes were themselves given to exaggeration by, for example, erroneously asserting that single-subject designs are applicable only to behavioral practice or that they cannot be applied to practice that relies on environmental manipulation or on ecological approaches to social treatment. Whatever their benefits or limitations, single-subject designs already have stimulated an impressive and growing body of research on practice, and much of this research has been conducted under conditions that previously were thought to preclude rigorous research. These achievements represent a dramatic departure from traditional models of research in social work.

The project frequently encountered the persistent controversies that surround quantitative research. Some social workers feel that quantification of research observations is dehumanizing and oversimplifies the complexity of human and social phenomena. Researchers cannot ignore this issue because they recognize that quantification is virtually indispensable in research conducted to rigorously validate propositions. Researchers also recognize, of course, that quantification in skillful hands does not dehumanize or oversimplify. The attention given to this issue, however, often means that too little attention is paid to qualitative methods, and especially to the valuable role they can play in exploratory research. In Chapter 7, Harold Weissman attempts to remedy that neglect for this project in a discussion of qualitative research methods.

The final chapter in this volume probably is the most important, but also the one least likely to be read with care. A list of recommendations seldom makes fascinating reading, and the recommendations of this project do not entirely escape that problem. Nevertheless, they deserve a careful reading since implementation of even a few of them could facilitate collaboration between researchers and practitioners, and promote the integration of research in practice.

FUTURE DIRECTIONS

The most striking and promising finding of the project was the widespread support project members found for the development of empirically based models of social work practice. This may seem innocuous unless one recalls that until only a few years ago the preference was for models based on theory. These two approaches are not incompatible, but a commitment to theory does not necessarily entail a commitment to the development of an empirical base for practice.

Even more important, reliance on the development of empirically based practice models carries with it a commitment to scientific research as a means to develop an empirical foundation for practice. Thus the adoption of empirically based models for practice moves the profession another step toward implementation of the profession's long-standing commitment to base its practices on a body of scientific knowledge.

The increasing interest in research among social work educators fortunately coincides with two related and supportive developments. One is the development of a flexible array of research methods and tools that readily can be adapted to the practice realities and problems confronting social workers. The second is the substantial, although small, increase in the number of social workers prepared to conduct research. This has been illustrated by the dramatic increase in the number of graduates from social work and social welfare doctoral programs.

The convergence of these developments appear to forecast a period of increased research activity in social work education programs, provided the resources needed to support such activities are available. Further, it can be expected that interest will grow in finding ways to bring practice and research into a close and mutually beneficial relationship. If these predictions prove to be correct, the beneficiaries will include not only social work education and the social work profession, but also the persons they exist to serve, who have a right to expect the best service that social work practice research can discover and develop.

NOTES

1. Allen Rubin and Aaron Rosenblatt, eds., *Sourcebook on Research Utilization* (New York: Council on Social Work Education, 1979); and Robert W. Weinbach and Allen Rubin, eds., *Teaching Social Work Reserch: Alternative Programs and Strategies* (New York: Council on Social Work Education, 1980).
2. Weinbach and Rubin, *op. cit.*
3. Rubin and Rosenblatt, *op. cit.*
4. Weinbach and Rubin, *op. cit.*

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ISSUES IN THE MSW RESEARCH CURRICULUM, 1968-1979

ALLEN RUBIN AND
SIDNEY E. ZIMBALIST

The last two decades have seen many revisions in social work education. Change has been pervasive--in accreditation standards, in proliferating BSW and doctoral programs, in the kinds of concentrations offered, and in experimentation with the length of graduate education--to cite just a few examples. The research component of the MSW curriculum is an area of change that has been the focus of much controversy during this period. Prior to 1968, research requirements were a major feature of master's-level social work education, as reflected in the Council on Social Work Education's accreditation standard that required the completion of a thesis or group research project as a prerequisite for graduation. Despite this curricular emphasis on research, evidence began to accumulate in the 1960s that, after graduation, social work practitioners tended to ignore research in their practice.[1] Concerns over this phenomenon coincided with the tone of the times, calling for more relevance in education. Students clamored for the reduction of curricular requirements that did not appear to have immediate applicability to practice. Research was one such area. Moreover, the thesis or project requirement often delayed their graduation.

In response to these concerns, the Council on Social Work Education (CSWE) in 1968 dropped the thesis or group research project from its accreditation standards. In 1969, in its revised Curriculum Policy Statement, the Council relaxed general expectations regarding research.[2] The avowed rationale for these revisions was that a reduction in research requirements would lead to curriculum experimentation and innovation and result ultimately in a greater integration of research and other curricular areas. This, it was believed, would enhance students' learning and attitudes about research, since they would be more likely to see its applicability to practice--its relevance. It thus was argued that the research component could be strengthened and integrated by reducing research requirements.[3] This rationale spoke of deleting separate research requirements, but did not specify alternative provisions for achieving the integrative innovations it sought to promote.

Revising curriculum policy and accreditation standards involved a political, democratic process, and many social work educators welcomed the reduction in research requirements. Others, however, foresaw that these revisions would not lead to a greater integration of research and other curriculum areas, but would provide many schools not oriented to research with an opportunity simply to reduce requirements.

In 1972, to observe the impact of these changes in curriculum policy and accreditation standards on the research content of the MSW curriculum, CSWE authorized a canvass of all MSW programs to develop a profile of their formal research content. The results of this survey reinforced fears of an eroding research component. Of particular concern were the findings that most schools no longer required experience with a research project and that most required only one or two research courses.[4] In view of these findings, some educators deplored the "demise" of research in social work education and urged a return to research requirements.[5] Others pointed to the evidence that even before research requirements were reduced, MSW graduates rarely utilized research.[6] Rather than return to previously separate requirements, they contended, research content should be infused into other areas of the curriculum, especially the practice and fieldwork components. Schuerman, a proponent of this approach, argued as follows:

> *The models of practice that are taught in class and field ought to be research-based. Empirical studies should be an integral part of the practice system and, insofar as possible, the intervention operations that are discussed should be investigated in systematic ways. The primary materials through which students learn practice ought to be research studies and descriptions of empirically based practice.*[7]

While not recommending that separate research courses be eliminated entirely, Schuerman maintained "that *if* practice teaching became empirically oriented there would be little left for the research sequence to worry about [emphasis added]."[8]

Although the debate regarding the best ways to strengthen the MSW research component is far from resolved, new opportunities are emerging. Expanding empirical content in social work education was a theme stressed at two recent national conferences: one on Research Utilization in Social Work Education was convened by CSWE, and another on the Future of Social Work Research was convened by the National Association of Social Workers (NASW).[9] A concrete opportunity for strengthening the research component has emerged as the Council's Commission on Educational Planning has undertaken deliberations on the development of a new Curriculum Policy Statement. These developments led CSWE's Project on Research Utilization in Social Work Education to replicate the Council's 1972 survey of the MSW research curriculum. This replication, conducted between the fall of 1978 and the winter of 1979, was expected to provide information for the Commission on Educational Planning as it considers the research component in the new Curriculum Policy Statement. The methodology and detailed findings of this replication were reported elsewhere.[10]

The remainder of this article highlights the major changes that have occurred since the curriculum policy revisions of the late 1960s. It also relates those changes to the material presented elsewhere in this volume and assesses the implications those changes have for the future direction of the MSW research component.

TRENDS SINCE 1968

A comparison of the findings of the 1972 and 1978-79 surveys of the MSW research curriculum identifies four key dimensions along which to examine trends since 1968: (1) research curriculum objectives, (2) the prevalence of a required empirical research project experience, (3) the proportion of graduation credits assigned to required research courses, and (4) the integration of research with other areas of the curriculum. The discussion that follows examines each of these dimensions.

Research Curriculum Objectives

Why are we teaching research to students preparing for roles as practitioners? How one answers this question strongly influences what kinds of educational experiences are selected for the research curriculum. For example, an intention to prepare practitioners to be capable of producing research, as opposed to the more limited objective of preparing research consumers, will bear on the extent and nature of the research curriculum. In discussions of the most appropriate objectives for the educational preparation of MSW practitioners, four possible objectives, of varying degrees of importance, are commonly identified. The typical student could be trained to (1) *understand* research, (2) *utilize* research studies, (3) *participate* in research studies, or (4) *produce* research.

There has long been a strong consensus among schools of social work that competencies associated with research consumption, that is, understanding and utilizing research, are important objectives of the MSW research curriculum. In both the 1972 and 1978-79 research curriculum surveys, almost all schools assigned at least moderate importance to these objectives, and 85 to 97 percent assigned high importance to them. There is much less agreement, and apparently some recent shifting, in regard to training students to participate in or to produce research. For many years the dominant view was that the preparation of research producers was not a realistic goal of the general MSW curriculum. This view was espoused by Mencher in the 1959 *Social Work Curriculum Study.*[11] Findings in the 1972 research curriculum survey reflected the prominence of this position. Most schools did not assign high importance to the research participation objective, and only 9 percent assigned high importance to the production objective. Moreover, a majority assigned low importance to research production. In the 1978-79 survey, however, 29 percent of the schools assigned high importance to the production objective, an additional 42 percent assigned it moderate importance, and a majority assigned high importance to the objective of preparing students to participate in research studies.

The increased importance assigned to objectives involving research participation and production provokes some critical questions. What accounts for this increase? What developments explain why more schools now believe research production to be a feasible objective of the general MSW curriculum? Some preliminary, speculative answers to these questions can be generated partially from the course syllabi and other supplementary materials gathered in the 1978-79 survey and telephone interviews with research faculty in six schools that participated in the survey.

Two basic themes that emerged during the 1970s seem to account for the increased importance schools are attaching to preparing students to participate in and produce research. One is the growing emphasis on accountability. According to faculty from several programs, the priority on accountability has led many agencies to expect the MSW practitioners they employ to contribute to agency evaluation activities and to know how to supply and interpret data associated with service delivery. A second factor has been the recent emergence of single-subject research designs. As evidenced in recent issues of social work research journals, an increasing number of social workers are advocating the use of idiographic research designs and proclaiming their high applicability to direct service practitioners.[12] These designs are seen as a tool that direct service practitioners can incorporate into the practitioner role to produce research that evaluates their own practice. The 1978-1979 research curriculum survey showed that five of the twenty-one schools that currently assign high importance to research production teach idiographic research designs geared to the practitioner-researcher model.

Although the emergence of accountability and single-subject designs helps to explain the rationale for an increased emphasis on research production in the curriculum objectives, it does not resolve the question of feasibility nor fully indicate whether these elevated expectations are matched by a greater emphasis of research as implemented in the curriculum. In Chapter 3 of this volume, for example, Rosenblatt argues that despite the emergence of idiographic designs and the practitioner-researcher model, the research production objective is not feasible as an objective of the general MSW curriculum.

Skepticism about the feasibility of the research production objective warrants a comparison of the research curriculum requirements in different schools. Schools assigning high importance to research production tended to have more separate research requirements than other schools. For example, all but 2 of the 21 schools assigning high importance to research required that all students complete an empirical research project; less than half the other schools did so. The 21 schools assigning high importance to research required a mean of 2.9 research courses, compared to 2.1 in the other schools.

This, of course, does not mean that the schools assigning high importance to research production were doing enough to attain that objective. No guideposts exist to make that determination. Also, the fact that the schools with the highest expectations tended to require a more extensive course sequence on research does not necessarily mean that they had more research content or a more effective research curriculum. The extent of separate research requirements does not indicate how much students may learn about research in other sequences.

In Schuerman's hypothetical model discussed earlier, for example, the entire curriculum would be research-oriented, but with few separate research requirements.[13] Also, in some schools that use the practitioner-researcher model, which is also known as the clinical scientist model, the production of idiographic research is taught in direct practice courses as well as in required research courses.

Further clouding the determination of feasibility was the notion expressed by several respondents that the number of courses and credits assigned to separate research requirements underestimates the effort and time students spend on those requirements. They noted that the empirical research project, in particular, requires far more work than other requirements with the same credit hours. Whether preparing the general MSW student to be a producer of research is feasible, and whether schools assigning high importance to this objective are really doing enough to attain it--or even more to attain it than other schools--cannot be answered without additional research. In the meantime, however, educators concerned about the plight of the MSW research curriculum may find some encouragement in the general elevation of research curriculum objectives since 1972. The extent to which this elevation in expectations is accompanied by a more extensive research curriculum, however, is illuminated further in the discussion that follows.

Extent of Research Requirements

Among the findings on trends in research requirements since 1968, two indicators stood out: required experience in an empirical research project, and minimum percentage of graduation credits required in research courses. The 1972 study showed that since 1968, when all schools had required a thesis or research project, the proportion of schools with this requirement had dwindled to 47.8 percent. By the 1978-79 academic year, this percentage had risen to 57.5. This increase since 1972, however, came primarily in schools that included the project as part of a course, not as a separate course or exercise unto itself. In fact, the proportions requiring the project as a separate component declined slightly [illegible]er 1972, from 43.3 to 42.5 percent. This raises three questions:

1. How meaningful are the learning experiences associated with projects incorporated into preexisting courses, as compared to separate project experiences?

2. When the project is incorporated into required research courses, is this achieved at the expense of content formerly covered in those courses, and if so, what content is displaced?

3. What is the content, quantity, and quality of those projects that are a part of courses?

One indicator of whether the increase in required courses that include research projects reflects a net addition to the overall research requirement or merely replaces some technical content is the total proportion of graduation credits assigned to required research courses. This is a truer indicator than the number of research courses required, which could be misleading because different courses can require different amounts of course time via credit hours; moreover, numbers of courses or credits are not always equivalent from school to school. In 1972, the average proportion of graduate credits related to research requirements was 12.1 percent. By 1978-79 this had fallen to 10.5 percent. A drop occurred in schools that required the research project (from 13.8 to 11.5 percent) as well as in those that did not (from 10.3 to 9.0 percent).

The increase in the project requirement, therefore, is contradicted by the proportion of credit hours allotted to cover this additional component. Consequently, the net research increment achieved by adding the project requirement may often be nil, in effect replacing previous technical content. A question can be raised as to how desirable or effective the replaced content was, particularly in view of studies indicating that MSW graduates, by and large, neither comprehend nor use research as much as the profession would wish.[14] Also, it is not known whether including the project requirement in research courses, especially in the context of relatively fewer credit hours, is more desirable or effective than the lost content. A few research faculty who were interviewed expressed the belief that the number of credit hours assigned to courses with the research project may underestimate the amount of student effort in them. The validity of that notion is another unknown factor.

Research in Other Sequences

In interpreting the continued diminution of credit hours required in the research component, a most important consideration is to what extent the research content is covered in other parts of the curriculum. This was the avowed intention in the decision to relax research standards a decade ago. An entire curriculum survey could be devoted to studying this issue fully.

The 1978-79 research curriculum survey asked each school whether any provisions were made for integrating research content into sequences other than research, and if so, how this was done. Of the 73 schools that responded, 38 (52 percent) answered affirmatively. The rest indicated that they had no such provisions. About half the 38 that answered affirmatively reported specific provisions that attempted to integrate practice content into the research component, but reported no specific provisions for infusing research content into other sequences. Among the schools that reported having specific provisions for infusing research content into other sequences, 5 reported only minimal, unsystematic efforts, such as "encouraging," "relying on," or "expecting" some instructors to include research studies among their assigned readings.

These efforts contrasted markedly with systematic provisions in 6 other schools, such as offering electives on empirically oriented practice in selected problem areas or requiring all course bibliographies to include research studies. (In the latter case, of course, it is not possible to know the extent to which inclusion of research studies on a bibliography means that students read them or instructors cover them.) Apart from promoting the coverage of empirical literature, the schools' provisions for infusing research content into other sequences focused on the required research project. Specifically, 8 schools provided for the research project to be conducted in the field practicum setting, and 3 "encouraged" students to report their projects in practice or policy courses.

The most striking finding, however, was that almost half the responding programs reported that they had no provisions for infusing research content into other sequences. Fewer than one out of 5 reported any systematic provisions in that regard. In view of the hope that reduced research curriculum requirements would result in a greater infusion of research content into other sequences, what do these proportions mean? Perhaps it is unreasonable to expect that all schools, or even most schools, would respond within ten years by systematically infusing research content into other sequences. Nevertheless, that only a small minority of schools were attempting to do so implies that the assumption made a decade ago needs to be reconsidered.

One other finding of the 1978-79 survey bears on whether the absence of specific accreditation guidelines regarding research promoted the integration of research content with the rest of the curriculum. This finding involved comparing the research sequence requirements of schools that have provisions for integrating research and other curriculum areas with the requirements of schools that have no such provisions. Of the 38 programs that claimed to have such provisions, the average proportion of research credits required for graduation was 11.7 percent; 23 schools (61 percent) required a project and course content on statistics. Of the 35 programs with no integrative provisions, the average proportion of research credits required for graduation was 10.2 percent and only 13 of these schools (37 percent) required a project and statistics content.

Ironically, then, the schools reporting integrative efforts appeared also to have had the most extensive *distinct* research requirements, including traditional emphases on research projects and statistics. It appears, therefore, that those schools which were research-oriented to begin with tended to apply this orientation across the board, through required courses, projects, and integration. Those not inclined toward research tended not to pursue this interest far in any direction, including integration. In short, most schools appeared to have reduced their research component without adding systematic provisions for infusing empirical content elsewhere. Those schools that attempted to integrate research with other curriculum areas usually did so without significantly reducing their separate research requirements.

IMPLICATIONS AND UNRESOLVED ISSUES

Social work education in the 1970s has been besieged by criticism and recommendations from diverse segments of the profession seeking a greater share of the curriculum for their concerns. Each area contains timely content pertinent to social work, such as ethnic diversity, women's issues, various underserved target populations, and a host of other concerns associated with governmental service priorities or emerging social issues. Without discounting the importance of these concerns, however, some social work educators have responded to their proponents by arguing that the MSW curriculum already attempts to cover too many disparate topics in too little time, resulting in a broad, but superficial educational experience.

In view of this dilemma, the authors will resist merely recommending, in response to the diminution of research reqirements, an expansion of the MSW research component. Although we believe that an empirical orientation should pervade the entire curriculum and that the research component needs to be expanded, it is not the purpose of this article to weigh the research component against other components and indicate what it should replace. There presently exist no outcome data to show exactly what is the optimal percentage of time that should be allocated to research content--regardless of whether it is structured in separate requirements or infused into other sequences.

However, the findings of the two research curriculum surveys reported here raise serious questions about the impact of the 1968-69 curriculum policy revisions pertaining to research. One thing that apparently has not changed as much as was anticipated is the integration of the research curriculum with the rest of the curriculum. Instead, the absence of specific guidelines concerning the research curriculum has frequently resulted in a diminution of separate research requirements without any systematic infusion of research content into other sequences. Moreover, the schools that have experimented with integrative provisions tend to be the ones that were research-oriented and that have typically kept the levels and kinds of research requirements they had before 1968.

It appears, therefore, that the current policy of encouraging the integration of the research component with other parts of the curriculum without establishing specific standards and guidelines for that component may need to be revised. If CSWE's standard-setting bodies wish to promote a stronger or more integrated research component, it is recommended that they articulate precise standards and guidelines to ensure systematic implementation of the desired research provisions. This is not necessarily a call for more research content or for any particular way of distributing that content, whether, for example, separately or by integration. Rather it simply recognizes that current policy regarding the research component has led most schools toward fewer separate research requirements, without any systematic implementation of alternative provisions for covering or infusing research content into other parts of the curriculum.

Some basic issues related to future directions for the research curriculum remain unresolved. Is research production a feasible objective for the typical MSW student? Comparative studies are needed to show under what conditions students graduate with competence to produce acceptable research and under what circumstances they actually do so in their practice. Regardless of the feasibility of the research production objective, it is important to distinguish it from student participation in an experiential project to produce research. Participation in such projects is a means, not an objective, and some faculty believe that it is an essential requirement in attaining objectives associated with research consumption. For example, experiencing the research production process is seen as a route to understanding research better and therefore utilizing it more wisely. Not all faculty see the research project this eay. To some it is an inappropriate means of preparing practitioners to be research consumers. The need, therefore, is for comparative outcome studies on alternative curricula for preparing students to understand and utilize research.

Other questions that remain unresolved are, to what extent are separate research requirements, including the project experience, helpful--or perhaps harmful--in preparing students to understand and use research? What is lost or gained by taking alternative approaches, such as teaching research only as part of nonresearch courses or offering courses on research consumption instead of research methods?

Although terms such as "integration" and "infusion" designate qualities often deemed highly desirable in research curricula, they also involve many uncertainties. As discussed by Weinbach in Chapter 5, attempts to integrate the research curriculum can take various forms. It can mean offering courses that engage students in using empirical literature to develop personalized models of practice or to learn of unmet needs or service delivery problems with target populations. Used in this way, "integration" means introducing research content in other sequences. The term also can mean gearing the research sequence to other sequences, such as by offering different sections of required research methods courses to correspond with the practice interests of concentrations of students. For example, students in direct practice concentrations may take sections that focus on single-subject designs which can be implemented as part of clinical practice, and students in management or planning may take sections that focus on nomothetic designs associated with program evaluation, community needs assessment, and so on.

Faculty deployment is another component in integrative strategies. For example, some programs require research faculty to teach in other sequences, as well, and one program uses practice-research teams or parallel teaching in an effort to prepare students to become clinical scientists who will produce idiographic research as part of their clinical practice. In short, there is a wide range in what is called integration--from encouraging faculty in other sequences to cover empirical content, to combining the content and teaching of research and practice courses. What, then, do we really mean when we discuss integrating research and other curricula? What outcomes are associated with the different approaches?[15]

Related to the integration issue is the ambiguity associated with infusing research content into other sequences. For example, there is the problem of feasibility. Can instructors with little background in research, who themselves may fear or dislike research, be expected to cover this content effectively? What steps need to be taken before such an expectation could become realistic?

In seeking answers to these questions, it may be useful to survey a representative sample of curricula to identify what research content currently is being taught in other sequences and to identify the criteria faculty use in determining what is research content. For example, one occasionally hears nonresearch faculty equate empirical studies with quantitative studies or with complex statistical analyses. They therefore may underestimate the extent of research-related content they teach. How often, for example, do these faculty overlook the fact that such works as *Street Corner Society* and *Tally's Corner* are based on empirical findings, using the research method of participant observation?[16] To what extent, therefore, is the problem not too little content, but rather insufficient identification of the research attributes of that content? Conversely, to what extent do proponents of infusing more empirical content into other sequences give inadequate attention to the qualitative, exploratory studies that may already be there?

These are some of the unanswered questions that impede formulating simple recommendations for more of this or that kind of curriculum. These issues require attention by the appropriate bodies of the Council on Social Work Education, by collaborative groups of faculty in research and other sequences, and by studies on the social work curriculum. It is much easier to pose these questions than to answer them, especially those that require outcome studies.

As Kirk and Rosenblatt encountered in their study reported in Chapter 4, many barriers to rigorous outcome studies exist in schools of social work. Even research faculty, who should be receptive to these studies, can be less than fully cooperative when it comes to having outcome measures done on their own classes. The resistance experienced by Kirk and Rosenblatt perhaps serves to illustrate that current problems in the teaching and learning of research content should not be attributed exclusively to any one segment of the faculty. Rather than point the finger at each other, it is hoped that faculty from research and other sequences can use the findings and issues reported in this chapter as a springboard for constructive collaboration around the role of research.

NOTES

1. Joseph W. Eaton, "Symbolic and Substantive Evaluative Research," *Administrative Science Quarterly*, Vol. 6 (March 1962), pp. 42-44; and Aaron Rosenblatt, "The Practitioner's Use and Evaluation of Research," *Social Work*, Vol. 13 (January 1968), pp. 53-59.

2. *Manual of Accrediting Standards* (New York: Council on Social Work Education, April 1971).

3. This rationale was conveyed in a conversation with Harold Lewis, who chaired the committee that formulated the research curriculum revisions. This intent

also is apparent in: Council on Social Work Education, "Task Force Report on Research in the MSW Curriculum," *Social Work Education Reporter,* Vol. 16 (March 1968), pp. 13, 20-21.

4. Sidney E. Zimbalist, "The Research Component of the Master's Degree Curriculum in Social Work," *Journal of Education for Social Work,* Vol. 10 (Winter 1974), p. 122.

5. Paul K. H. Kim, "Research Way to the Remedy for a Professional Dilemma in Social Work," *Arete,* Vol. 4 (Spring 1977), pp. 139-152.

6. Eaton, *op. cit.;* and Rosenblatt, *op. cit.*

7. John R. Schuerman, "On Research and Practice Teaching in Social Work," in *Sourcebook on Research Utilization,* ed. Allen Rubin and Aaron Rosenblatt (New York: Council on Social Work Education, 1979), p. 145.

8. *Ibid.*

9. For a report on the proceedings of the National Conference on Research Utilization in Social Work Education held in New Orleans in October 1977, see Rubin and Rosenblatt, *op. cit.* For the report on the NASW Conference on the Future of Social Work Research held in San Antonio in October 1978, see David Fanshel, ed., *Future of Social Work Research* (Washington, D.C.: National Association of Social Workers, 1980). Both conferences were funded by the Social Work Education Branch of The National Institute of Mental Health.

10. Allen Rubin and Sidney E. Zimbalist, *Trends in the MSW Research Curriculum: A Decade Later* (New York: Council on Social Work Education, 1979).

11. Samuel Mencher, *The Research Method in Social Work Education: Social Work Curriculum Study,* Vol. 9 (New York: Council on Social Work Education, 1959), p. 5.

12. See, for example, *Social Work Research and Abstracts,* Vol. 14 (Winter 1978); and *Journal of Social Service Research,* Vol. 3 (Fall 1979).

13. Schuerman, *op. cit.*

14. See, for example, Eaton, *op. cit.*; Rosenblatt, *op. cit.*; Betsy-Lea Casselman, "On the Practitioner's Orientation Toward Research," *Smith College Studies in Social Work,* Vol. 42 (June 1972), pp. 211-33; Stuart A. Kirk, Michael Osmalov, and Joel Fischer,"Social Workers' Involvement in Research," *Social Work,* Vol. 21 (March 1976), pp. 121-24; and Stuart A. Kirk and Joel Fischer, "Do Social Workers Understand Research?" *Journal of Education for Social Work,* Vol. 12 (Winter 1976), pp. 63-70.

15. A study of one integrative approach found that students in the integrated section of a research course learned less and had less positive attitudes than students in the regular, nonintegrated section. See Michael S. Kolevzon, "Integrational Teaching Modalities in Social Work Education: Promise or Pretence?" *Journal of Education for Social Work,* Vol. II (Spring 1975), pp. 60-67.

16. William F. Whyte, *Street Corner Society: The Social Structure of an Italian Slum* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1955): and Elliot Liebow, *Talley's Corner* (Boston: Little, Brown & Co., 1967).

3

RESEARCH MODELS FOR SOCIAL WORK EDUCATION

AARON ROSENBLATT

An old tradition in social work is the uneasy relationship between practitioners and researchers. Strains of this sort were evident approximately one hundred years ago. The profession was then developing its first national organizations for disseminating information and exchanging views, and some leaders of the charity organization movement were proposing a scientific approach to social welfare problems.

"Charity is a science," D.O. Kellogg proclaimed. "The science of social therapeutics . . . has its laws like all other sciences."[1] Leaders of the movement were optimistic. They assumed that once these scientific laws were discovered, rapid progress would be made in solving the social problems of the day.

From 1874 to 1879, social workers met together with social scientists as a constituent part of the American Social Science Association. Their divergent interests, however, were soon much in evidence. The socially minded reformers manifested a zeal for action. This stance clashed with the "neutral scientific objectivity" of the theoretically minded social scientists.[2] By 1879 the two groups had decided to go their separate ways. It was the social workers who left to found a new organization of their own, one more in keeping with the emphasis on caring and on helping persons in need. That organization survives today as the National Conference on Social Welfare.

These early strains are still present today. The social work profession still manifests a strong interest in science and research. It still makes use of studies to improve direct practice and social policy. Nonetheless, the profession still finds it difficult to unite direct practice with scientific study.

Currently, social work practitioners may choose among five different prescriptive models of research.[3] The wide range of choice reflects the lack of consensus in the profession. At one extreme, research is, at best, peripheral to most social work activities. At the other, it is an essential element, fully informing direct practice. Between these extremes are other variations. This article identifies the essential features of these diverse models and discusses some of their implications for social work education.

DIRECT PRACTICE AS RESEARCH PROJECT

Sixty years ago Richmond stressed the centrality of research for social work practice. In *Social Diagnosis*, she propounded a view of direct service that linked it closely to study, diagnosis, and treatment.

> *Investigation, or the gathering of evidence, begins the process [of social diagnosis], critical examination and comparison of evidence follow, and last comes its interpretation and the definition of the social difficulty. In common use, case workers often call all of this "an investigation." . . . Investigation enters into diagnosis, it enters into the laborious and learned seeking for truth which deserves to be termed social research, and it forms an important part of the many inquiries into social conditions which do not meet the exacting requirements of research, but which may properly be described as social investigations.*[4]

Later in the volume Richmond discussed the significance of inference, hypothesis, and experiment for the social investigation.[5] Investigation became so central to direct practice that social workers were often referred to as social investigators.

The Richmond perspective on research and practice still remains a part of social work. In a more recent book on social work research, Thomas presented views that are similar to those propounded by Richmond. Both practice and research are based on factually verifiable information. Practitioners should use research methods to obtain hints about ways to obtain and process information. They also should use these methods in interpreting findings, making decisions, and reporting the results.[6]

Further evidence of the continued acceptance of this model appeared in the November 1978 issue of *Social Work*. In the lead article, Katherine Wood, a clinician trained in the use of research, echoed the views of Richmond:

> *The processes of casework . . . are exactly the same processes as those of research. These include formulating the problem for study; setting hypotheses; defining the dependent variable; defining the independent variable; collecting and analyzing data; evaluating the outcome; and drawing inferential conclusions that are supported by the data.*[7]

Furthermore, Wood argued, "Every case can and should be a research project for the practitioner."[8] The views of Minahan are complementary. After listing a number of similarities between researchers and practitioners, she arrived at this conclusion: "All practitioners should act like researchers and all researchers should act like practitioners."[9]

From this perspective, research methods and the scientific approach are part and parcel of direct practice. The union of research and practice is almost total. To learn about social work practice, one must also learn about social work research.

Minahan attempted to identify, for all three levels of social work education, curriculum goals that flow from the similarities between practitioners and researchers. She proposed that education at every level emphasize both logical and creative thinking and the use of empirical observation. Much of the content already included in the curriculum is applicable. Specifically, she pointed to an emphasis for all students on "social work objectives and perspectives, values, data collection, assessment, establishment and measurement of goals and tasks, and methods of involvement of consumers and people with different bases of influence."[10] There would still be a need for special courses for researchers. In the final analysis, both practitioners and researchers require a core education that is similar if not identical.

RESEARCH TECHNIQUES AS THERAPY

Here the integration of research into direct practice has been extended one step further. Certain basic techniques of research--counting and measuring and graphically representing change--can themselves become an essential part of the practitioner's stock in trade.[11] Specifically, the technique of having clients monitor their own activities and record critical events in their lives becomes an essential aspect of the therapeutic strategy.

In a research study, investigators are wary about directing a subject's attention to a specific behavior that is under study. This kind of attention can sometimes cause the subject to change the behavior. Any reactivity in a measure causes it to be suspect as a source of bias in a carefully designed research study. For researchers the best measures are nonreactive. They have no effect whatsoever on the subject under study.

Direct service practitioners view reactivity from a different perspective. When they use self-recording for treatment purposes, the strategy is to maximize the reactivity of the measure. Research techniques and sources of bias in research become techniques for practice intervention.[12]

Also of great importance to those who advocate the use of research in direct practice is the case-by-case measurement of outcome. Hudson and Fischer of the University of Hawaii are among those strongly committed to this perspective. Hudson has dramatized the importance of research in practice by formulating axiomatic statements for practice. One is that, "If you cannot measure the client's problem, it does not exist." A second one is the statement of a corollary, "If you cannot measure the client's problem, you cannot treat it."[13]

The implications of this approach are receiving increasing attention. At the University of Hawaii, the faculty has accepted research as "a critical component of the curriculum." Students are required to enroll in four research courses.[14] At the University of Washington, students enroll in a course combining "practice methods, clinical research and practicum experience." The results reported appear favorable. This type of integration is said to destroy the "stereotypes of the touchy-feely clinician who felt practice was an art, and the hard-hearted researcher who could not be bothered with anything not quantifiable . . . . With this approach the enmity of researcher and practitioner becomes a piece of ancient history."[15]

THE CLINICAL SCIENTIST

Briar is the person most identified with developing the model of the clinical scientist in social work practice. He finds it paradoxical that social work, although claiming to be a scientifically based profession, has produced few clinical scientists. The clinical scientist model that he proposes seeks to heal the split between researcher and practitioner. Research and practice are no Jekyll and Hyde phenomenon. Both are desirable. Both are to live side by side in the clinical scientist. A thorough grasp of each component enhances the other.

Clinical scientists do much more than use the techniques of research in practice. According to Briar, they do the following:

1. *Select the methods and techniques that are known empirically to be the most effective.*
2. *Conduct rigorous ongoing evaluations of their practice.*
3. *Participate in the discovery of effective ways of helping clients.*
4. *Use untested and unvalidated practice methods cautiously and only with adequate control, evaluation, and attention to client rights.*
5. *Communicate the results of their investigations.*[16]

One of the changes expected from this new breed of practitioner-researcher is the accelerated development of knowledge utilization. Clinical scientists will undertake small studies. They will be able to mount them easily. Ideally, the results will have"direct, immediate utility for practitioners." Such "evaluations of practice can be incorporated into the routine practice of social work clinicians."[17]

Some social work practitioners, but not all of them, are expected to become clinical scientists. Briar suggested that a clinical scientist should be retained on the staff of every social agency employing several social workers engaged in direct practice. Schools of social work, however, are likely to employ large concentrations of clinical scientists as members of their faculties.

Presumably, the restrictive use of clinical scientists in social agencies and their concentration in schools of social work result from the heavy costs of such endeavors. First, there is the high expenditure of time. The caseload of clinical scientists needs to be smaller than that of other clinicians. They need time to think and to conduct studies, thereby restricting their availability for practice. Second, the autonomy of clinical scientists must be high. They need greater control than other clinicians in the selection of their caseload. Third, their conformity to established agency procedures and practices is low. They must be able to experiment with new approaches. They must depart from tradition. It is their task to question established procedures and to evaluate their utility.[18]

Clinical scientists also are to assume leadership in directing research and development programs. They are to use research to devise and build practice models. Feedback loops are used systematically for the purpose of making modifications in models that are being developed. In this way practice and research are joined together.[19]

THE RESEARCH CONSUMER

The consumer-of-research model is radically different from the other three. It makes no attempt to incorporate the methods of research into practice. Its advocates expect direct service practitioners to become consumers of research, not research practitioners. Tripodi, Fellin, and Meyer from the University of Michigan and Gilbert and Specht from the University of California, Berkeley, have promulgated this point of view.

Many social work graduates learn little more than the most elementary knowledge about research and its methods. At some schools of social work, students graduate who have completed only one course in research. They are ill-equipped to conduct a research study. Few employers harbor any expectations about the research capabilities of these graduates. Also, many are not equipped to "consume" research, that is, to read a report intelligently. Consequently, it is difficult for practitioners to derive any of the benefits presumed to result from reading research studies that bear on clinical practice.

A major goal of the consumer model is to raise the research sophistication of social workers. They should learn to read studies intelligently and to make appropriate applications of research findings. One of the chapters in the text written by Tripodi, Fellin, and Meyer attempts to set forth principles and guidelines that can facilitate the utilization process. The consumer model assumes a place of limited importance in the research curriculum of students studying to become direct practitioners. Research is considered much more essential for students concentrating on public policy and program planning. These students must complete a sequence of research courses to prepare them for a career in planning: "students in the direct services, in which the knowledge of applied research methods is less central to practice, would take a substantially different type of research course, designed mainly to produce intelligent consumers or users."[20]

For Gilbert and Specht, "*knowledge-producing* research . . . whether for the direct and/or the indirect services--is the primary responsibility of those with doctoral training in social work, social welfare, and the related behavioral sciences."[21] This model leads to the development of separate research courses for indirect and direct service practitioners. The two types of students would study different research reports and become acquainted with different areas of research. They also require different amounts of research training. Students interested in direct service would receive less training in research.

Smith has challenged the value of this kind of training. In contrast to Gilbert and Specht, he believes it is the responsibility of practitioners to contribute to the "knowledge-building enterprise of the profession."[22] Other social workers join Smith in arguing that it is essential for practitioners to acquire research skills in order to advance the profession.

THE RESEARCH SPECIALIST

The research specialist model requires little explanation. It accepts research as a basic method of social work practice. Years of education and practice are required to become proficient in research. Indeed, acquiring a mastery of research is as complex and demanding as acquiring mastery of any of the other social work methods.

From this perspective, it becomes appropriate for schools of social work to train research specialists. Most schools of social work, however, generally assign a low priority to the importance of this kind of training. A study examining curriculum objectives shows that over two-thirds of the schools of social work rate training students to assume responsibility for the design and conduct of a research study as of "low importance." Almost all schools rate the following two objectives as highly important: (1) to prepare students to *understand* research (comprehend its basic principles and procedures); this goal approximates the "direct practice as research" model; and (2) to prepare students to *utilize* research of others (analyze and selectively apply the results of published research); this goal approximates the "consumers of research" model.[23]

The research specialist model appears to foster a division between research and practice. If some students are to become research specialists, the practice specialists can reduce their commitment to research. Similarly, students electing to become research specialists often reduce their commitment to practice.

The Council on Social Work Education is attempting to heal the split between research and practice by achieving a better integration of curricular components: "A better integration of research and practice would strengthen not only research instruction, but also practice instruction. A small, isolated research curriculum has little influence on how students approach practice methods and substantive problem areas."[24] For at least two decades, social work educators have struggled with the task of integrating research and practice.[25] One integrative effort requires students enrolled in methods courses to read research studies and to try to apply the results to practice. Another effort requires students to conduct research studies at their fieldwork placement on subjects of interest to the agency.[26]

Kolevzon studied one attempt to integrate research and practice. The results were negative. The research attitudes of students in the integrated seminar were less positive than those of the other students. The integrated students also learned less.[27] Scheurman made the following thoughtful comments about the general problem:

> *Though such efforts at integration are well intentioned, I think that they will fail to the extent that they are efforts to bring together two different content areas without essentially affecting either area. If in these efforts we continue to teach methods of intervention that are not empirically based, and if we continue to teach research approaches that are not useful to the practitioner, then more physical closeness in the curriculum will not yield the desired product.*[28]

Comparatively few students choose to specialize in social work research at the master's level. In contrast, specialized training in research is a major part of doctoral training, where the problem of achieving an integration between practice and research is manifested in the increasing movement to develop clinical doctoral programs at schools of social work.[29]

DISCUSSION

Research and science are closely associated with rationality, logic, and progress in gaining control over problems, either natural or social. Students in psychiatry, psychology, nursing, and social work are expected to learn about the use of scientific methods. Any practicing profession located in a graduate school would lose support in the university if it withdrew its commitment to scientific values.

All five models identified in this article acknowledge the contributions of scientific research. They differ in the extent to which research is viewed as an essential part of practice. The first three models propose an almost total interpenetration of research and practice. Research and practice are represented as being fully congruent. As Wood argued, "every case can and should be a research project for the practitioner."[30]

Indeed, the ideal professional career is often presented as consisting equally of research, practice, and teaching. Social work students, however, are unlikely to become well-grounded in both research and practice by the time of graduation from the master's program. Not only would they need to acquire extensive knowledge and skill in both methods, but they also must learn to carry out different social roles. Some years ago Merton identified three components of the social roles assigned to persons engaged in scientific research:

> *The role of workers in basic research has distinctive characteristics: (a) it provides them with relative autonomy in selecting the problems on which they will work; (b) it gives them . . . latitude . . . to shift from these initial problems to others turning up in the course of the inquiry, which they find more interesting or promising; and (c) in this role, the primary "reference groups" . . . are made up primarily of fellow scientists, with nonscientists entering only at a distant remove.*[31]

The role of social work practitioner was never designed to meet these criteria. It makes little sense to talk of practitioners having autonomy to make decisions over the problems they choose to study. Typically, any clients who appear at a social agency needing help are assigned to them. Practitioners have no power to refuse service to clients because they prefer to investigate other problems. Neither does anyone expect practitioners to abandon clients if they should become more interested in working on other kinds of problems.

To pose such alternatives to social work practitioners is to show a lack of familiarity with their social role. Their essential purpose is to help those in need, not to study them. Following Merton, "study" for the purpose of helping is essentially different from study for the purpose of contributing to knowledge. For this reason the priorities of research and practice often clash in social agencies and clinics.

The disinterestedness of basic scientists also marks them as separate from social work practitioners. Such scientists are content to work on a problem for years. They are also iconoclastic. Einstein is reputed to have said, "I have only two rules which I regard as principles of conduct . . . The first: *Have no rules*. The second is: Be independent of the opinions of others."[32] Thus the typical stance of the scientist is to question all authority. This makes for difficulty in an organization in which action is required to be helpful here and now, when the answers to questions may be unproved. "When the chips are down, as they generally are in professional practice, scepticism . . . is a luxury that few can afford."[33]

Social agencies generally expend comparatively few of their resources on knowledge building. Administrators readily acknowledge the value of research, but their budgets show scanty appropriations in support of it. In part, this is so because most social work programs are rewarded for the intent, not the effectiveness of their performance. Social workers in this regard are like lawyers, ministers, and physicians. They do not possess a technology that consistently ensures the success of their endeavors. For example, 50 percent of all legal cases that go to trial are lost; prayers, although helpful, are not always answered; some patients who consult physicians grow worse or die. Since demonstrating effectiveness is seldom of critical importance in many social agencies, research receives little support.

Quite apart from the policies followed in social agencies, a case can be made against combining the roles of researcher and clinician except under special conditions. When the emphasis on demonstrating effectiveness is great, clinicians have a strong motive for misusing research. Under these circumstances, professionals are put in the false position of gathering data that can be used against them. Unless they are adequately protected, they would be saints or fools not to think about ways of measuring progress that proved their competence.

In another place, I argued, "No matter how tempted, a program administrator should not try to evaluate his own program."[34] The same holds true for clinicians. The inevitable temptation of clinicians is for them to view their work in terms of their hopes and to avoid gathering information that produces dissonance. This is especially so when clinicians are expected to be accountable for defects in their practice. In these circumstances, when they perform well as researchers and identify flaws in their practice, they cause trouble for themselves as clinicians. This discussion is anything but academic. I can recall several occasions when clinicians who conducted their own research made elementary errors that they would have detected quickly if they had been reviewing the work of others.

At the start of this section, the following question was posed: Are clinician and researcher likely to remain separate roles for most social workers? In view of the discussion, my answer is that these roles should remain partially separate. Clinicians should understand research and know how to conduct a study. Preferably, they should evaluate the clinical work not of themselves, but of others.

For purposes of this discussion, research in social work may be viewed as presenting two different foci. One relates primarily to immediate practice issues: What seems to work best? What do the clients say? What strains do staff feel? How much time is needed? Seeking answers to these questions requires staff to be familiar with methods of data collection. They might need to engage in participant observation, conduct research interviews, construct a simple questionnaire, and so forth. The intent here is not to verify knowledge or to prove anything conclusively, but to develop hypotheses and to gain enough information to make informed judgments. This is a professional practice role.

Certain professions, such as medicine, law, and psychology, have little expectation that practitioners will conduct practice research. These expectations probably are tied to the structure of service delivery, which is predominantly private in these professions. Salaried professionals employed in the public sector have a much greater stake in the development of practice, given their dependence on public funding, as well as a much greater opportunity, given their organizational bases, to assist in the development of knowledge.

The verification of knowledge is and should remain an effort that exceeds the resources of practitioners. What is true, what is the cause of certain events, demonstrating the relationship between important variables should not be part of the practitioner role.

Furthermore, researchers are enjoined by the norms of science to engage in organized skepticism.

> *The temporary suspension of judgment and the detached scrutiny of beliefs in terms of empirical and logical criteria have periodically involved science in conflict with other institutions. Science which asks questions of fact, including potentialities, concerning every aspect of nature and society may come into conflict with other attitudes toward these same data which have been crystallized and often ritualized by other institutions.*[35]

Researchers must remain skeptical. "They do not preserve the cleavage between the sacred and the profane, between that which requires uncritical respect and that which can be objectively analyzed."[36] This stance often brings them into conflict with practitioners and administrators. The goal of researchers is to extend knowledge and to certify its truth. Clinicians must suspend the organized skepticism of the scientist in order to adhere to the practices of their profession.

Certifying the truth and healing the ill are both noble pursuits. Yet scientists and practitioners within the same profession make invidious comparisons about the importance of each. Which should command higher respect? Which, greater resources? Which effort is more noble? Part of the strain between them results from this kind of competition. Practitioners should respect their ability to remove pain and restore lost capacity regardless of whether results achieved are fully explicable by science. They are certain to be at a disadvantage in this debate if they value the ability to certify truth more than the ability to heal.

But the entire debate is best avoided. Society needs the contributions of both scientists and practitioners. Neither can replace the other. The issue that should be debated by members of the profession is how to organize their limited resources in pursuit of their common objectives. The five research models for social work practitioners show that this issue needs continuing attention from all members of the social work profession.

NOTES

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2. Robert M. MacIver, "Sociology and Social Work," in *Social Work Year Book*, 2nd issue, ed. Fred S. Hall (New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 1933), pp. 497-500.

3. For a description of research models from another perspective see Stuart A. Kirk, "Understanding the Utilization of Research in Social Work and Other Applied Professions" (Paper prepared for the Conference on Research Utilization in Social Work Education, New Orleans, October 1977). For another attempt to delineate social work models, see Edwin J. Thomas, "Introduction," *Journal of Social Service Research*, special issue, Vol. 2, No. 1 (1978), pp. 7-10.

4. Mary Richmond, *Social Diagnosis* (New York: Free Press, 1965), pp. 51-52.

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6. Edwin J. Thomas, "Use of Research Methods in Interpersonal Practice," in *Social Work Research: Methods for the Helping Professions*, ed. Norman A. Polansky, rev. ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1975), pp. 254-83.

7. Katherine M. Wood, "Casework Effectiveness: A New Look at the Research Evidence," *Social Work*, Vol. 23 (November 1978), pp. 437-59.

8. *Ibid.*, p. 455.

9. Anne Minahan, "Specifying Curriculum Goals for Research in Social Work Education" (Paper presented at the Conference on Research Utilization in Social Work Education, New Orleans, October 1977).

10. *Ibid.*

11. Walter W. Hudson, "Research Training in Professional Social Work Education," *Social Service Review*, Vol. 1 (1978), pp. 116-21.

12. Rosemary O. Nelson, "Methodological Issues in Assessment via Self-Monitoring," in *Behavioral Assessment: New Directions in Clinical Psychology*, ed. John D. Cone and Robert P. Hawkins (New York: Bruner/Mazel, 1977), pp. 217-40.

13. Walter W. Hudson, "First Axioms of Treatment," *Social Work*, Vol. 23 (January 1978), pp. 65-66.

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4

RESEARCH KNOWLEDGE AND ORIENTATION AMONG SOCIAL WORK STUDENTS*

STUART A. KIRK AND
AARON ROSENBLATT

Research is receiving increasing attention in the social work profession. Two new research journals recently emerged; the number of journal articles on research and research training has increased; many schools of social work are attempting to integrate education in practice and research; and the National Association of Social Workers (NASW) and the Council on Social Work Education (CSWE) recently sponsored national conferences on research. All these activities have the common objectives of improving the ways of generating social work knowledge, of disseminating the results of research more effectively, and of equipping practitioners with the skills they need to utilize research in their practice.

Attempts to change the place of research in social work must begin with faculty. They are the ones who admit students to social work programs. They introduce them to the profession and provide them with the knowledge and skills needed for beginning practice. Moreover, they present substantive bodies of knowledge and theory to students, and they orient them to the place of research in practice and in the knowledge-building process.

At present, relatively little is known about the ways that students view research, about their exposure to research and experience with it, or about the knowledge of research they derive from their professional education.[1] Furthermore, the studies available in the literature examine only students working toward their master's in social work; they do not take into account either bachelor's-level students or doctoral candidates in social work. A broad view of professional education is important since BSW workers are full members of NASW and since CSWE accredits undergraduate social work programs.

The present study is part of a three-year project on Research Utilization in Social Work Education sponsored by CSWE and supported by the National Institute of Mental Health. One goal of the project is to collect information about the research experiences, attitudes, and knowledge of undergraduate, master's, and doctoral students enrolled in social work programs in the United States. This article presents an initial analysis of the relationship between research orientations, research knowledge, and research education for BSW, MSW, and doctoral students.

RESEARCH METHODS AND FINDINGS

The 15 social work programs in this study were selected solely on the basis of their willingness to participate. The programs are located in all regions of the country. Some train only undergraduate students; others train students at all three levels of social work education.

The project director visited the liaison faculty member at each of the schools to discuss the goals of the project and to explain the use of the Kirk-Rosenblatt Research Inventory (K-RRI). Despite these efforts, cooperation was uneven. The range in the rates of response was much greater than expected. Two schools suddenly dropped out when it was time to collect data. Despite the interest of the departmental chairpersons, the faculty refused to participate. The reason cited at one school is worth noting. The faculty feared that the students would suffer and be unduly discouraged because they might not know the answers to most questions about research knowledge.

Initial work on the K-RRI began in the spring of 1977. Several members of the research faculty at the School of Social Welfare, University of Wisconsin, Milwaukee, reviewed and commented on an initial version of the inventory. The authors also used the results from a pretest on a group of 56 students in extensively revising and shortening the instrument.[2] The K-RRI contains items in the following domains: student background characteristics, attitudes toward the role of research in the profession, experiences in research courses, research experiences in field placements, and experience in the conduct of research. The final section of the inventory contains 60 true-false items about research and statistics. Most students completed this 16-page inventory in 40-50 minutes.

The design of the study called for the instrument to be administered to students during the early fall of 1977 and then again in the late spring of 1978. The pretest and posttest data would allow for an analysis of change in students' research orientation and knowledge during an academic year.[3] Unfortunately, the response rates in the spring were too low at most schools to permit a longitudinal analysis of change. Therefore, the data in this article are cross-sectional.

Four groups of respondents participated in the study during the 1977-1978 academic year: (1) students who completed the K-RRI in the fall of 1977, (2) those who completed it during February and March of 1978 when three undergraduate programs were added to the study, (3) those who completed the inventory in the spring of 1978, and (4) those who completed the K-RRI during both the fall and spring. For this fourth group, only their responses in the spring are used in this article.

Response Rates

Data were obtained from 1,127 students enrolled in 15 social work programs. They consisted of 473 BSW, 552 MSW, and 102 doctoral students. Table 1 presents information by school, educational level, and response rate. The response rates among the undergraduate programs ranged from 12 to 79 percent, among master's programs from 33 to 83 percent, and among doctoral programs from 15 to 86 percent. The response rates were affected by the following: the inventory was not always distributed to all students; some students who received the K-RRI refused to complete it; some students, particularly doctoral students, were not on campus when the inventory was distributed; some inventories arrived at the university after the semester had ended.

TABLE 1
Participating Programs and Response Rates

Academic Level and School	*Students Enrolled, 1977-78*	*Students Completing K-RRI*	*Response Rate %*
Undergraduate[a]			
University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee	194	153	79
Morgan State University	333	39	12
Memphis State University	235	67	29
University of Nebraska	200	47	24
Brigham Young University	150	113	75
Colorado State University	400	54	14
	1,512	473	31
Master's[b]			
University of Hawaii	202	168	83
University of South Carolina	202	125	62
Howard University	205	157	77
University of Washington	329	102	33
	938	552	59
Doctoral[b]			
Florida State University	21	18	86
Washington University	42	26	62
University of Michigan	45	19	42
Columbia University	98	30	31
Adelphi University	59	9	15
	265	102	38

[a] Undergraduate enrollments were obtained from the programs and in some cases are approximate figures.

[b] MSW and doctoral enrollment data were obtained from Allen Rubin and G. Robert Whitcomb, comps., *Statistics on Social Work Education in the United States: 1977* (New York: Council on Social Work Education, 1978).

Therefore the researchers compared the respondents in this study with certain selected characteristics of all BSW and MSW students registered in CSWE-accredited programs in 1977-78, as well as doctoral students registered in social work programs.[4] Among the undergraduate students in the accredited programs, 79 percent were women, and 64 percent were white. In this study, 83 percent were women, and 75 percent were white. Among MSW students in accredited programs, 71 percent were women; 81 percent were white; and 64 percent had concentrations in casework, social treatment, or generic social work practice. Among MSW students in this study, 72 percent were women; 50 percent were white; and 68 percent had concentrations in the casework or generic areas. The higher proportion of minority students in this study was deliberate. Several schools with high minority enrollments were invited to participate so that the analysis could include comparisons between Black and white students.[5]

Among doctoral students in social work programs, 53 percent were women; 72 percent were white. In this study, 56 percent were women; and 75 percent were white. Thus the data on sex, race, and area of social work suggest that students in this study were similar to those enrolled in social work programs. These similarities, however, are no guarantee that the students in this study were representative of all social work students enrolled during the 1977-78 academic year. Nonetheless, from the evidence available, with the exception noted for race, there is no reason to assume these were not typical students enrolled in typical programs.

Research Courses

Students acquire research attitudes, experiences, and knowledge in many ways. They may learn about research from previous courses or field experiences or from reading and studying on their own. Students at all levels of social work education are required to enroll in research or statistics courses. At the more advanced levels, they are required to complete more than one research course. A strong positive correlation exists between years as a student (from college freshman through doctoral student) and the total number of research and statistics courses completed ($r = .65$, $p < .001$). Furthermore, comparisons in the number of courses completed at the three educational levels show significant differences ($F = 304$; df 2, 1124; $p < .0001$). The mean number of research courses completed was .75 for BSW students, 2.25 for MSW students, and 4.66 for doctoral students. Any comparisons among BSW, MSW, and doctoral students must take into account this significantly different exposure to research.

Research Orientations

Is research important to social work practice? Is social work research useful to practitioners? Is social work research biased? Answers to questions such as these indicate the research orientation of students. Previous attempts to measure the orientations of social workers toward research treated them as one-dimensional, either favorable or unfavorable.[6] This approach, however, overlooks the multidimensionality of the research orientation. A student can, for example, view research as critically important to the profession, yet firmly believe that much current research is not useful to practice. It makes little sense to classify both of these orientations under either a favorable or unfavorable category.

The K-RRI items measure three dimensions of research orientation--importance, usefulness, and unbiased nature of research. Items were assigned to each of the three dimensions on the basis of their face validity and their correlation with the other items. Each item consisted of a declarative statement to which the student was requested to respond on a 6-point Likert scale ranging from "strongly agree" to "strongly disagree." Reliability tests were computed for each group of items. Items that significantly lowered the reliability were dropped from the index. The value of negatively worded items was reversed. Thus, the higher the score, the more favorable was the orientation of the student toward research.

The first index assessed the importance of research to the profession (see Table 2). Seven items comprise this index. Some are philosophical ("Social work should be more science than art"). Others make pragmatic recommendations ("Limited agency resources should not be spent to pay for evaluative research"). Scores ranged from 7 to 42; the mean was 28.1 with a standard deviation of 5.4 for 1,070 students. The Cronbach's alpha reliability was .65.

TABLE 2
Research Orientation Index Items

Importance of Research
1. Social workers should rely heavily on knowledge gained from research.
2. Social work should be more science than art.
3. I think that a major part of my professional education should consist of research training.
4. Program administrators should be required to establish research units to evaluate their program's effectiveness.
5. I feel that social workers should keep abreast of research in their field.
6. The continuation of a social work program should be contingent on effectiveness demonstrated by research.
7. Limited agency resources should not be spent to pay for evaluative research.

Usefulness of Research
1. Social work research is not particularly useful to the practitioner providing direct services.
2. In general, I am not persuaded that scientific research generates useful social work knowledge.
3. In my opinion, research findings have limited applicability to complex practice situations.
4. Generally, a researcher's interests are not related to the practice needs of social work.
5. Research is too time-consuming to use in practice.

Unbiased Nature of Research
1. Much social work research is not valid.
2. Social work research often examines relatively insignificant questions.
3. Researchers are not self-critical and objective when it comes to assessing the importance of their own studies.
4. Many research findings are slanted in order to appeal to funding sources.
5. The conclusions of research reports are seriously biased in favor of the researchers' initial hypothesis.
6. Agency research tends to legitimate programs instead of providing corrective feedback.
7. Statistical procedures tend to be used as a "smokescreen" to obscure otherwise worthless or invalid findings.

The second index, usefulness of research, consists of five items tapping the practice-relatedness of research (for example, "Social work research is not particularly useful to the practitioner providing direct services"). The index had a range of scores from 5 to 30; the mean was 21.2 with a standard deviation of 4.3 for 1,074 students. The Cronbach's alpha reliability was .71.

The third index, unbiased nature of research, consists of seven items indicating the extent to which research results are valid (for example, "Agency research tends to legitimate programs instead of providing corrective feedback"). The index had a range of scores from 7 to 41; the mean was 25.0 with a standard deviation of 5.4 for 1,034 students. The Cronbach's alpha reliability was .78.

RESULTS

The goal of social work education is to increase the knowledge of students about human behavior, social policy, practice methods, and research. The K-RRI items are designed to assess, in some elementary way, the knowledge of the students about research and statistics. Initially, the developers of the K-RRI collected a pool of 120 test items from existing knowledge instruments and course examinations, as well as from talks with research instructors. The authors also created additional items and converted multiple-choice items into true-false statements.

A pretest of the 120 items took place during the spring of 1977. Knowledge items showing insufficient variance of response (over 80 percent of respondents having the correct answer) in the pretest were dropped from the inventory. In addition, four research professors read all the remaining knowledge items. Any items on which they failed to agree about the correct response was eliminated from the inventory. At this point, several new items were added to widen the coverage. Finally, all the items were edited slightly. This process produced 60 true-false items that comprised the section on research knowledge.

Correct answers were scored "1" and incorrect "0." The knowledge score consisted of the sum of all correct responses. Any items that were skipped were treated as incorrect answers. The knowledge index had a potential range of scores from 0 to 60. The mean score was 31.7 with a standard deviation of 10.2. The Cronbach's alpha for the index was .88.

Number of years in school was related to the scores of students on the knowledge index ($r = .37, p < .001$). As Table 3 indicates, the higher the educational level, the higher the mean scores of students. This finding is also consistent with the relationship between research courses completed and knowledge ($r = .40, p < .001$). In other words, the higher the level of social work education, the higher the number of research courses completed and the higher the acquisition of research knowledge by students.

Table 4 shows the correlations between knowledge scores and the three research orientations at the BSW, MSW, and doctoral levels. In addition, it shows the correlation between the knowledge scores and the number of research courses completed by students. The patterns are somewhat different for each of these variables.

The correlation values between knowledge scores and importance-of-research orientation moved from -.07 for BSW students to .07 for MSW students and then to

.35 for doctoral students. Clearly the correlations between knowledge scores and the importance of research orientation increased steadily in a positive direction from the BSW to the MSW and doctoral levels.

TABLE 3
Relationship of Educational Level
to Research Knowledge (Analysis of Variance)

Educational Level	*N*	*Mean on Knowledge Index*	*S.D.*	*d.f.*	*F Ratio*	*P*
BSW	473	28.1[a]	10.3			
MSW	552	32.9	8.0	2;1124	94.3	.0001
Doctoral	102	41.6	12.1			

[a] All groups were significantly different from each other, using the Tukey procedure of SPSS. See N. Nie et al., *Statistical Package for the Social Sciences* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1975).

TABLE 4
Correlation of Knowledge with Selected Orientation
Variables at the BSW, MSW, and Doctoral Levels

	Educational Level		
Orientation Variable	*BSW*	*MSW*	*Doctoral*
Importance of research	-.07	.07	.35[a]
Usefulness of research	.16[a]	.07	.33[a]
Unbiased nature of research	.10	.04	.17
Number of research courses	.15[a]	.27[a]	.38[a]

[a] $p < .001$.

The pattern was different for knowledge scores and the usefulness-of-research orientation at the three educational levels. Table 4 shows no comparably steady change in the positive direction in the strength of the correlations at the different educational levels. The correlation between knowledge scores and the usefulness of research orientation was .16 for BSW students, but dropped to .07 for MSW students before rising to .33 for doctoral students. At the BSW level the correlation between the usefulness-of-research orientation and the knowledge score was more positive than that between the importance-of-research and the knowledge score (.16 versus -.07).

The correlations between knowledge scores and the convictions about the unbiased nature of research were the weakest of the three orientations. They also showed the smallest increments from one educational level to the next. The strength of the relationship between knowledge scores and conviction about the unbiased nature of research was comparatively weak at all three educational levels; its strength at the doctoral level (.17), for example, was substantially lower than that of the correlations for knowledge and the importance orientation

(.35) and knowledge and the usefulness orientation (.33).

Both students and faculty should be gratified to learn that the strength of the correlations between knowledge scores and the number of research courses completed increased steadily from one educational level to the next. Furthermore, each of these correlations was statistically significant at the .001 level. Also, Table 3 shows that the mean knowledge scores at these levels grew consistently larger. Perhaps even more gratifying to faculty was the additional information that the knowledge scores at each educational level were statistically different from one another.

DISCUSSION

This article presents data from a comprehensive survey examining the research experiences, attitudes, and knowledge of social work students. It is one of a series of papers to be based on this survey.[7]

By extending the study to include both undergraduate and doctoral students, we were able to show a view of education that was omitted in previous analyses. The data from this study give reason for educators and students to believe in the cumulative effect of education. MSW students knew significantly more about research than BSW students, and doctoral students knew significantly more than MSW students.

In addition, among doctoral students there was a consistently strong correlation between knowledge of research and opinions about its importance and usefulness. An equally high correlation existed between the knowledge scores and the number of research courses completed. Research professors at the doctoral level must be doing something right. At least they have not prevented advanced students from acquiring knowledge.

Also encouraging was the information that conviction about the validity of research showed a lower correlation with knowledge than correlations between knowledge and the importance of research and knowledge and the usefulness of research. The comparative weakness of this correlation suggests that doctoral students are learning to become sophisticated judges of research. They know that the validity of research findings varies from study to study. One should not gain conviction about the validity of research once and for all. A healthy dose of skepticism is in order. However, doctoral students were as cynical about research results as BSW and MSW students. We shall return to this anomaly later.

Doctoral students knew more about research and thought it was more important and useful to the profession than did BSW and MSW students, but professors who teach research courses should not expect to encounter substantial anti-research beliefs among BSW or MSW students. Undergraduates, although the least knowledgeable, did express positive beliefs about research in social work. Their mean scores on the usefulness and importance indexes were above the midpoints. A majority of undergraduates thought that research was important and useful to social work practice.

At the master's level, an even larger majority of students expressed positive attitudes toward research. Eighty-four percent of MSW students had mean scores above the midpoint on the usefulness index. A similar proportion were above the midpoint on the importance index. Among social work students, then, those at each educational level generally expressed positive beliefs about the importance and usefulness of research. Although undergraduate and master's students might not have been as committed to research as doctoral students, they were not negatively inclined toward it.

This finding of widespread belief in research appears to contradict what research professors often assume about their nondoctoral students, namely, that they are not research-oriented. A distinction needs to be made, however, between having positive *attitudes* about research and having the research *skills* required to use it. Many social work students do not or think they do not have the skills to use research. For example, when students in this survey were asked what they felt was the primary factor limiting the usefulness of research, over a third of the MSW and over 40 percent of the BSW students indicated that it was their inability to understand research. It may be that the anxiety among students that is frequently encountered by research instructors stems much more from the students' inability to comprehend a subject matter that they believe is important than from any disdain of research.

In sum, several preliminary findings were consistent with the general expectations of faculty and students. The higher the educational level, the more research courses completed. The more research courses completed, the more important and useful research was thought to be. The higher the educational level and the more research courses completed, the more research knowledge acquired.

The direction of causality, however, can only be inferred from cross-sectional data. Nonetheless, in interpreting the data, it is tempting to pronounce that completing more research courses had the happy result of contributing substantially to the education of students. As they learned more, their orientations changed. Students came to view research as important and useful. Doctoral students, for example, appeared most affected by education. This interpretation has important practical implications for social work education, since the number of research courses is a matter of curriculum design and can be changed easily.

Other causal processes may be operative and should be mentioned. For example, students who initially believed in the importance of research may be those who chose to enroll in research courses. Their learning may have been a result of their self-selection. It may have been their orientation to research that led them to acquire more knowledge about research. If this alternate interpretation proves valid, it will direct the attention of faculty to the orientation of students at the time they are being selected for admission. This model is similar to that used by Jerome Frank, who sought to increase the effectiveness of psychotherapy by socializing patients about its value before they became patients.

A third possibility is that there was an interaction effect among number of research courses, attitudes about the importance and usefulness of research, and knowledge scores. For example, students who believed research was important may have enrolled in more undergraduate research courses. The cumulative effect of these courses may have encouraged them to seek graduate education. Graduate education, particularly doctoral education, required enrollment in more courses. Strengthening convictions about both the importance and usefulness of research may have led to greater knowledge about research.

Conviction about the unbiased nature of research was not highly correlated with number of research courses completed or knowledge scores. Students with extensive exposure to research tended to be as cynical as those with virtually no exposure. Doctoral students, however, were most likely to think of research as important and useful. On the face of it, these findings appear to be somewhat contradictory, or at least inconsistent. Is there an explanation for this?

It may be that as students acquire more exposure to and knowledge about research they learn to appreciate the *potential* importance of research and knowledge building for the profession and the *potential* usefulness of research findings. At the same time that their knowledge of research is increasing and they are becoming persuaded about its potential usefulness, they also become aware of the *actual* limitations of the research enterprise. Students learn that both the methods of research and the results of research can be fallible. They learn that researchers are human--that directors of social agencies often have good organizational reasons for misusing research findings. Consequently, students develop a knowledgeable cynicism about research, which is different from one based on ignorance of the subject.

Undergraduate students may acquire less positive attitudes about research that are not based on research experience or research knowledge. Their cynicism may stem from a lack of understanding about the role of research in the profession. It is not known whether the orientation of BSW students remains the same or changes as they pursue their undergraduate education, nor whether undergraduate students with a negative orientation to research choose not to pursue graduate education. This interpretation would imply that similar views are held for quite different reasons by social work students and, by extension, social workers. The value of these alternative explanations will be explored in later articles.

NOTES

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1. For studies that address issues related to students' views of research, their exposure to research, and their knowledge of it, see Frederick W. Seidl, "Teaching Social Work Research: A Study in Teaching Method," *Journal of Education for Social Work,* Vol. 9 (Fall 1973), pp. 71-77; Michael S. Kolevzon, "Integrational Teaching Modalities in Social Work Education: Promise or Pretence?" *Journal of Education for Social Work,* Vol. 11 (Spring 1975), pp. 60-67; Stuart A. Kirk and Michael S. Kolevzon, "Teaching Research Methodology from Z to A," *Journal of Education for Social Work,* Vol. 14 (Winter 1978), pp. 66-72; Aaron Rosenblatt, Marianne Welter, and Sophie Wojciechowski, *The Adelphi Experiment* (New York: Council on Social Work Education, 1975); Harris K. Goldstein and Linda Horder, "Suggested Teaching Plans for Maximizing Research Learning of Three Types of Social Work

Students," *Journal of Education for Social Work,* Vol. 10 (Fall 1974), pp. 30-35; Stuart A. Kirk and Aaron Rosenblatt, "Barriers to Students' Utilization of Research" (Paper presented at the Annual Program Meeting of the Council on Social Work Education, Phoenix, Arizona, March 1977); and Sidney E. Zimbalist, "The Research Component of the Master's Degree Curriculum in Social Work: A Survey Summary," *Journal of Education for Social Work,* Vol. 10 (Winter 1974), pp. 118-23.

2. Copies of the Kirk-Rosenblatt Research Inventory are available from the senior author.

3. For a presentation of the analysis of change based on longitudinal data from two MSW programs with relatively good pretest and posttest responses, see Stuart A. Kirk, Joel Fischer, and Robert Weinbach, "Changes in Graduate Social Work Students' Research Knowledge and Attitudes During an Academic Year," unpublished manuscript (Albany, New York: 1980).

4. Allen Rubin and G. Robert Whitcomb, comps., *Statistics on Social Work Education in the United States: 1977* (New York: Council on Social Work Education, 1978).

5. Stuart A. Kirk, Roger McNeely, and Aaron Rosenblatt, "Race and Research Orientation: A Survey of Black and White Social Work Students," unpublished manuscript (Albany, New York: 1979).

6. Stuart A. Kirk, Michael J. Osmalov, and Joel Fischer, "Social Workers' Involvement in Research," *Social Work,* Vol. 21 (March 1976), pp. 121-24; and Goldstein and Horder, *op. cit.*

7. The first was by Aaron Rosenblatt and Stuart A. Kirk, "Comparison of BSW and MSW Students' Research Attitudes" (Paper presented at the Fiftieth Annual Meeting of the International Association of Schools of Social Work, Jerusalem, Israel, August 1978).

5

VARIATIONS IN SOCIAL WORK RESEARCH EDUCATION

ROBERT W. WEINBACH

The absence of specific accreditation guidelines regarding research content in social work curricula might, logically, have two results. A school could pay lip service to the importance of research, state that an emphasis on the value of research permeates the curriculum, and do little in the teaching of research knowledge and skills. It is not my intention to document the existence of such a reaction or to condemn it in an area of education in which vast amounts of content must be forced into restricted amounts of time. The relative lack of guidelines is probably a relief to those educators who feel research should have a low priority in the curriculum.

A second response to the Council on Social Work Education (CSWE) guidelines--creative and innovative approaches to teaching research--appears to be more prevalent and will be the focus of this discussion. The variations in content that occur among the schools of social work and the changes that seem to be occurring are well-documented in the report by Rubin and Zimablist of follow-up research on social work research curricula.[1] However, beyond the semester hour counts and content areas addressed, there exist variations in philosophy and degree of commitment to research that can only be uncovered in a detailed analysis of some of the programs of research education that have evolved.

Early in the history of the CSWE Project on Research Utilization in Social Work Education, an effort was made by staff and advisory committee members to identify some of the innovative approaches to social work research education. As a result of this brainstorming process, educators in 17 programs were invited by the project's directors to conduct descriptive analyses of their research components and to compile written reports of their efforts for possible dissemination to other social work educators. This invitation produced nine such reports that lent themselves to an identification of similarities and differences.[2]

The nine descriptive profiles which form the basis for the analysis that follows should not be considered more than a convenient sample of approaches to social work research education. Representativeness cannot be assumed on any geographical, educational, or other demographic variable. The wide diversity in the nine schools represented (Case Western, Chicago, Florida State, Hawaii, Howard, Morgan State, South Carolina, University of Washington, and Utah) is little more than a fortuitous accident for which neither the project directors nor the author can take any credit.

An analysis of the different approaches reveals several identifiable variables that imply a philosophical position regarding the place of research in the curriculum and highlight the major issues associated with social work research education. I would propose that any of the present approaches to teaching social work research could be identified in relation to these variables. Any group of faculty members developing or restructuring a curriculum must address these variables if a unified curriculum that is reflective of current faculty preferences and practitioner needs is to be achieved. An explication of the variables and how they manifest themselves in nine varying approaches to research education would facilitate curriculum planning and might result in an educational package that is commensurate with the needs and values of educators, of student consumers, and, ultimately, of clients.

A bit of prognostication is implicit in the program descriptions. By describing the kinds of research that will be emphasized in its research courses and the values and ethics it wishes its students to adopt, a program (and its faculty) makes a statement about both the present and the future place of research in social work practice. What do the programs, individually and as a composite, propose as the future relationship between those who offer services and those who seek to serve the practitioner through research.

OUTCOME OBJECTIVES

What are the different characteristics that educators hope to foster among their graduates? What attitudes toward research and what research skills and knowledge are proposed as reasonable expectations for students? The nine program descriptions displayed only a limited consensus on outcome objectives.

One school proposed an understanding of research concepts and methods as an appropriate objective at the undergraduate level. In contrast, MSW programs that tended to take traditional approaches to research education seemed strongly committed to producing social workers who are intelligent consumers of research reports. This may be a compromise objective, perhaps a recognition of the realities documented by Rosenblatt and others.[3] It says, in effect, that "since you probably will not elect to do research as practitioners, let's see if we can't at least teach you to read more of it, have a better attitude toward it, and, one hopes, apply it in your practice." In fact, those programs that emphasized consumer skills also tended to place a high premium on the application of research findings in practice. The tandem objective of consumer-implementer would seem to be logical, laudable, and realistic, given the orphan status that research often has held in the curriculum and in social work practice.

Programs that emphasized other objectives did not discredit the importance of intelligent consuming and integrating of the research findings. They did, however, emphasize the need for other types of knowledge and skill that they believed to be of special relevance to contemporary social work practice. One doctoral program, in a description of its research units, suggested that its graduates have a primary responsibility for knowledge building as they assume leadership positions in the field. Another program assumed that students can be trained to glean from research literature the knowledge necessary to develop a personalized model of practice. Other programs perceived skills in evaluative research as essential for graduates who will practice in an age when demonstrations of accountability are likely to be critical to agency survival.

Although dissemination of student research findings was used to demonstrate the achievement of objectives, one follow-up study suggested that publication can be highly supportive of such other objectives as establishing positive attitudes toward research, fostering the utilization of research findings in practice settings, and encouraging the continued use of research methodologies after graduation.[4] Whether publication is viewed as an objective or as a means to attaining objectives, the implicit message is that reward and reinforcement for research efforts may be vital to the assimilation of desirable attitudes toward research.

DESIGN FOCUS

What are the research designs that are taught to tomorrow's practitioners? What does this selected emphasis say about how educators expect practice and research to interface?

The skills and knowledge believed essential for the future practitioner were clearly evident in the priorities assigned to learning about survey research, experimental designs, evaluative research, and many other design variations. Evaluation, in one or more of its forms, was emphasized in many of the program descriptions examined. An area of practice such as mental health might suggest an evaluation design focus, or the emphasis might be on designs relevant to a variety of direct practice interventions. Other students may be sensitized to the importance of evaluative techniques in such areas as training, technical assistance, or social planning.

The single-subject design has emerged as an alternative that is thought to provide an empirical approach to the evaluation of individual practice. It integrates practice and research and stresses the appropriateness of a research orientation to decision making in practice. Single-subject design is advocated as a bridging technique, one that can be used equally well by the busy practitioner or by the researcher primarily interested in knowledge building.

Traditional research designs also continue to be emphasized in social work curricula. A number of social survey approaches continue to be used in promoting learning about research in both undergraduate and graduate study. Many master's programs presented a wide array of empirical designs as integral to social work practice. The designs were advocated as part of a range of approaches to knowledge building, including evaluation, and were described as having specialized uses based largely on situational factors and the state of knowledge in particular areas of practice. A program that emphasizes the need for skills in specialized research designs, based on whether a student chooses a major in macro or micro intervention, allows the student to focus on those research designs believed to be most appropriate to the chosen form of interventive specialization. This approach carries the suggestion that not all research designs are, or should be, used in all areas of social work practice.

COURSE CONTENT

What are some of the dramatic variations that occur in standardizing and sequencing units of learning? Although the program descriptions did not always provide detailed descriptions of course content, they nevertheless reflected different values about two important areas--the degree of structure needed in a research teaching module and the most desirable sequence for acquiring the knowledge and skills of research.

Research course requirements ranged from individualized with wide latitude for student choice, to highly structured with few options. In one program, a student choosing a particular specialization could find that 18 or more hours of the program were committed to required research courses. Although course options were related to the size of programs and their capacity to offer a variety of electives with sufficient enrollment, the opportunity to specialize in choice of research courses seemed to occur in smaller as well as larger programs.

Research may remain an identifiable sequence, or the teaching of research may be totally integrated with other curriculum areas, most frequently social work practice. The issue of whether a separate identity for research within the curriculum is desirable is clearly not resolved at this time.

Another issue, the best way to sequence the components of research knowledge, is similarly unresolved. Although there was some consensus that learning units related to statistical analysis of data might be less-stimulating and more anxiety-promoting for the student than content related to research methods, programs disagreed on which area of learning should occur first. Is it better to allow the student to "get the worst out of the way" and to see that expectations in the mystifying world of mathematics are usually minimal? Or should the student first be seduced with those aspects of research methodology more closely aligned to practice methods and thus be set in a receptive attitude for later research units?

Efforts have been made to teach the two areas concurrently and to emphasize only the less-intimidating descriptive statistics, but the debate remains with advantages and disadvantages inherent in whatever sequencing is tried. Some of the more tedious components of research education are disappearing from course syllabi--the pencil and paper computation of standard deviations and chi-squares, for example--but the spaces vacated are more than filled with newer content. Computer processing and data interpretation have been added to many programs, as have newer, perhaps more practice-relevant designs. Occasionally, such teaching innovations as advisement to foster publication of findings are offered to students in an effort to broaden both the appreciation of research and the sense of responsibility to it.

TEACHING METHODS

The curricular descriptions provided by the nine schools were replete with creative approaches to teaching research. Some were major innovations, paradigms that lent themselves to duplication and further examination. Other teaching innovations, both in the descriptive profiles obtained by the project and others that appear in the literature and that surface regularly at annual conferences and symposia, were exciting and imaginative, but might be so tied to the personality and style of the teacher that replication of their success by anyone other than a clone of their creator is highly unlikely. New approaches variously reflected a belief in didactic methods of education, in the value of participating in research to learn about it, or, in some instances, a combination of the two. As in most areas of education, the issue of whether the didactic is superior to the experiential continues to be unresolved as educators seek better ways to teach research knowledge, skills, and attitudes.

One program description that reflected a high value placed on experiential learning required students to gain experience in evaluation as project staff, whether for course credit, through paid employment, or to meet dissertation requirements. Although all nine programs seemed to encourage experience as participants in research projects, some programs seemed to view direct experience as an application or synthesis of learning achieved from didactic approaches--that is, the thesis model. Other programs viewed research experience as a learning device in its own right to be employed almost from the outset.

The continued existence of didactic approaches to research education seemed to suggest that the classroom is still seen as an appropriate place to learn about research. In at least one program, it actually was possible to substitute advanced research courses for a second-year MSW practicum. Endorsement of some combination of both the didactic and experiential methods of research education seemed almost the rule. There were wide differences on what constitutes an optimal mix between the didactic and the experiential and on whether both learning approaches might be offered concurrently, or whether a system of prerequisites existed.

INTEGRATION WITH LEARNING IN OTHER CURRICULUM AREAS

How do various programs seek to keep research learning within the mainstream of the curriculum? What methods are used to insure that the teaching of research underlines the position that research is an integral part of effective social work practice?

Some programs used logistical devices to insure that the teaching of research remains in contact with the rest of the curriculum. One not overly subtle but effective technique for insuring that faculty did not become overidentified with teaching and doing research to the exclusion of other areas of the curriculum was the administrative edict that all faculty were to teach in at least two course sequences. The appreciation for and understanding of other content areas is facilitated if research teaching faculty have training and experience in the delivery of social work services rather than in other areas of behavioral science. Having faculty teach both practice and research to the same students and using team and parallel teaching approaches are other ways of insuring the integration of research faculty with the rest of a program.

The intention to integrate research education with other curriculum areas is probably universal. Methods to achieve this objective include agency sponsorship of student research practica, student development of interventive models based on empirical findings, structuring program evaluation as a subspecialization of an administration major, use of single-case analysis juxtaposed with field and practice courses to break down the barriers between research and practice learning, and the incessant reiteration that social work research has no value until the final step in the process has occurred--that is, implementation of findings in the practice arena.

Although most attention has been focused on the integration of research learning with practice learning, the descriptive profiles also suggested a continuing concern with the integration of research with other content areas. The knowledge-building emphasis in doctoral programs and especially the large number of dissertation topics geared to understanding humans in their social environment suggested that research has not become divorced from learning about human behavior. Schools that maintained a thesis requirement also gave evidence that students frequently selected topics that reflected the relationship between research and human behavior.

In one school, a research specialization was aimed at providing an understanding and experience of research especially relevant for either the indirect practice social worker or the policy-level administrator. The requirement for numerous courses in evaluative research in another program underlines a position that policy can only be made and analyzed after certain research methodologies have been applied. The thesis and dissertation topics selected by students suggested that social welfare and policy, like knowledge of human behavior, was viewed as closely related to social work research, particularly evaluation.

It seems fair to predict that research methodologies will continue to be linked closely to knowledge building in areas of human behavior and social policy. A productive linkage with social work practice and the delivery of services may require a more concentrated effort.

CONCLUSIONS

This sampling of how a small minority of social work programs teach research does not, of course, approach total description or understanding of either the programs themselves or of national trends in social work research education. At best, it provides some insight into where some programs seem to have come from and where they seem to be going. It also provides certain reference points whereby educators can place in perspective their own efforts to teach research knowledge, skills, and attitudes.

What are some of the key choices that face educators who seek to provide education for research which will support the social work practice of the 1980s and beyond? Certain questions must be answered if meaningful and productive decisions about the curriculum are to be made.

Outcome Objectives

1. Is it reasonable to assume that students can be taught to accept the belief that research is an integral part of social work practice and to assimilate desirable attitudes toward it?
2. Do all social work graduates need to be knowledgable, skilled researchers?
3. Is the practitioner-researcher model desirable, or is there more value in maintaining a distinction between persons who are practitioners and those who are researchers?
4. Is it realistic to talk of producing intelligent consumers of research who have not participated in and are not equipped to conduct independent research?
5. Is a model of practice based heavily on empirical research knowledge likely to produce more knowledgeable practitioners or practitioners constrained by the limits of knowledge within social work?

Design Focus

1. Do the state of the art in social work practice and the continued shifting

of social work activities into new areas where little is known make it too difficult to justify the time spent in teaching future practitioners about the use of explanatory, experimental, and other sophisticated research designs and techniques of statistical analysis?

2. Is evaluation truly a desired and necessary linkage between practice and research or will its marketability fade as accountability pressures lessen?
3. Are single-subject research designs the long-sought-after marriage between practice and research or are they merely a logical and long-practiced approach to practice, packaged as research in an effort to obscure a continued atmosphere of hostility between researchers and practitioners?
4. Should single-subject research be presented as the primary exposure to research for future practitioners or as one of several possible designs of varying sophistication that should be part of a wide range of knowledge-building strategies?
5. Are the designs of research equally suited to the needs of both students preparing for micro practice and those preparing for macro practice, or should students have a selected exposure to those designs judged most likely to be useful in their area of practice specialization?

Course Content

1. Will students select those courses in research that are most likely to be of value to them? Or is a highly structured curriculum needed to insure that future practitioners will emerge with desirable research attitudes, knowledge, and skills?
2. Can a major research thesis or practicum be justified in light of its undocumented contribution to learning?
3. What sequencing of content will avoid creating in students either attitudes of indifference or abject terror? What sequencing is most likely to convey a healthy respect for research and its place in practice?
4. Is an identifiable research sequence desirable or an encumbrance to integrating research content into the curriculum?
5. How can content about computerized data processing best be integrated into curricula so that future practitioners will possess both the ethical standards and technical skills necessary to use modern data processing technologies to foster more effective service delivery?

Teaching Methods

1. What is the appropriate educational mix between didactic and experiential learning about research?
2. Can the student be expected to benefit from involvement in research projects prior to exposure to didactic instruction in research techniques and methods?
3. Can students assimilate classroom learning about research without concurrent or prior experience as doers of research?
4. Can teaching methods be found that will excite the student to learn the knowledge and skills of research, or is this an unrealistic objective given the type of student who generally selects social work education?
5. Is research best taught as a separate content area or when it is designed to permeate other areas of the curriculum?

Integration with Learning in Other Curriculum Areas

1. How necessary is it that teachers of research be experienced in and identified with social work practice?
2. What logistical techniques will best avoid an unhealthy overspecialization among educators assigned to teach research?
3. How can social work educators foster student attitudes regarding the dependence of practice on empirical research knowledge that are comparable to present attitudes regarding the relationship between research and social policy or human behavior?
4. How can future practitioners best be helped to accept the premise that social work research is of little value in itself and is beneficial only if its findings are implemented in practice?
5. How can future practitioners best be taught to use practice knowledge and experience to identify priorities for the use of scarce research resources?

The nine program descriptions examined suggested tenative, often conflicting answers to these questions and others that face the social work educator. The choices that must be made by social work educators as individuals will similarly reflect their individual perceptions and projections of what--based on experience and common sense--is likely to be the context of social work practice in the future. Judging from the creative and innovative responses that have already emerged, it appears that a relatively unconstrained educational climate may be optimal for the experimental and even trial and error approaches that will be needed.

NOTES

1. Allen Rubin and Sidney E. Zimbalist, *Trends in the MSW Research Curriculum: A Decade Later* (New York: Council on Social Work Education, 1979).

2. See Robert W. Weinbach and Allen Rubin, *Teaching Social Work Research: Alternative Programs and Strategies* (New York: Council on Social Work Education, 1980).

3. Aaron Rosenblatt, "The Practitioner's Use and Evaluation of Research," *Social Work,* Vol. 13 (January 1968), pp. 53-59.

4. Rosalie A. Kane, "Testing Incentives to Encourage Research Activities in Newly Graduated Practitioners: A Follow-Up Study," in Weinbach and Rubin, *op. cit.,* pp. 68-80.

6

INTEGRATING PRACTICE AND RESEARCH CURRICULA: A SYNTHESIS OF FOUR REGIONAL CONFERENCES

ALLEN RUBIN

For several decades, social work educators have decried the research curricula of MSW programs for not producing students who know and use research.[1] To ameliorate this problem,the educators have been calling for a reduction in the compartmentalization of the research and practice components in social work education--a stronger integration of the two areas.[2] This was recommended by Mencher in the 1959 Council on Social Work Education (CSWE) Curriculum Study, and was the avowed intention behind deleting the research project requirement in the 1968 revisions of the CSWE accreditation standards.[3] At present, however, only a fraction of the MSW programs report any systematic efforts to integrate these curriculum components.[4]

In October 1977 the Council on Social Work Education convened a National Conference on Research Utilization in Social Work Education to explore the reasons for low practitioner utilization of research and to discover how to increase it. The conference, which was held in New Orleans, was part of the Project on Research Utilization in Social Work Education, and was supported by a grant from the Social Work Education Branch of the National Institute of Mental Health. A major recommendation emerging from the conference was a reaffirmation of the oft-repeated need to integrate practice and research curricula. Between June 1979 and February 1980, the Council held four regional conferences to disseminate the results of the national conference. Established as a result of input from regional faculty steering committees, the theme of each conference was integrating practice and research, primarily in the MSW curriculum. This article synthesizes and reports the deliberations of the regional conferences.

CONFERENCE FORMAT

If conference attendance is indicative, integrating research and practice curricula has become a high priority for many social work faculty. The four conferences drew over 250 faculty members, who attended at their own or their schools's expense. These participants were divided about evenly among faculty representing research sequences and those representing other sequences. Many from other sequences were chairpersons of micro practice, macro practice, and fieldwork sequences; their participation was requested in the invitational letters to schools.

Although the participant characteristics and topics were similar at all four conferences, the conferences differed in length (one to two days), number of participants (40 to 130), and nature of presentations (formal papers or brief, informal panelist comments to stimulate in-depth discussion). The conferences were held in New York City, Berkeley, Austin, and Louisville. The deliberations of the conferences, including both what was presented to participants and what was brought up for discussion by participants, tended to fall into four major topics: (1) types of research-practice curriculum integration, (2) barriers to integrating the research and practice curriculum, (3) approaches to achieving research-practice integration, and (4) unresolved problems and issues.

TYPES OF RESEARCH-PRACTICE CURRICULUM INTEGRATION

The material presented orally or in advance papers described educational arrangements for integrating practice and research curriculum. These approaches have been described elsewhere and will merely be summarized here.[5] The various types of research-practice curriculum integration can be compared on three dimensions:

1. *Objective*, whether students are prepared to produce or utilize research.
2. *Sequence*, whether integration includes micro practice, macro practice, fieldwork, or some combination of these sequences.
3. *Scope*, how much of the educational program is covered by the integrative innovation, ranging from an elective course to an entire year of required courses and fieldwork.

Perhaps the most comprehensive and ambitious integrative approach is the clinician-researcher model . This model, which attempts to combine the roles of researcher and direct service practitioner, received the greatest attention in the questions and discussions by participants. It focuses on idiographic research designs, which are also referred to as single-subject experiments, single-case studies, and single-system designs; these designs can be used in assessing, monitoring, and evaluating individual cases or interventions. Proponents of this model recognize the limitations inherent in its inferential character and in its potential for role conflicts, but nevertheless recommend it as the best way to predispose students toward using empirical studies or research methods as part of their practice.[6]

The curricular scope of this approach varies. At some schools it means nothing more than including content on idiographic designs in the general research methods course required of all students. At the University of Hawaii, it means separating required research courses into two tracks, one that teaches ideographic methods to direct practice students and another that teaches nomothetic methods to macro-level students.[7] Some programs teach both practice and research courses in one instructional unit. This approach combines content on research and practice by using team teaching (research and practice faculty) or parallel teaching (the same faculty member teaches both the research and practice content). At Rutgers, for example, two faculty members simply got together informally and decided to begin team teaching their research and practice courses.[8] At the Universities of Washington and Chicago, this approach is employed more systematically. The instruction in research and practice, and the fieldwork are combined into a required educational unit covering an entire year.[9]

The remaining integrative approaches teach research methods as part of macro-level practice, or they limit their focus to the utilization of research. In one such approach, students in a practice course use research findings showing what is effective practice to construct personal models of practice. This course engages students in five steps of utilizing research to form a practice model, so that students (1) identify studies with findings showing interventions that are effective, (2) assess the quality of the supporting evidence, (3) develop generalizations from the findings, (4) deduce practice guidelines, and (5) specify an evaluation plan.[10] Another approach is to incorporate research methodology into macro practice courses and identify useful techniques typically associated with the research production objective, such as needs assessment surveys, staff and client monitoring surveys, and program evaluation.[11]

Not all these approaches to integration require massive revisions of curricula, and many schools integrate research and practice content without labelling it "integration." The distinction between integrative and separate approaches can be foggy. Any social work research, since it investigates social welfare problems and programs, must to some extent be integrated with practice. There are many routes to integration. To some, integration means nothing more than encouraging faculty in one sequence to use examples applicable to another sequence. The comprehensive, systematic integrative approaches, such as combining research and practice teaching, sometimes meet resistance from faculty. Barriers to accomplishing the more ambitious forms of integration received much attention at the conferences.

BARRIERS TO INTEGRATING THE RESEARCH AND PRACTICE CURRICULUM

Revising entrenched curriculum patterns is difficult, and many conference participants had already encountered, or anticipated, stiff resistance to integrating practice and research curriculum. Three types of barriers to integration were identified: (1) incompatible instructor orientations or attitudes, (2) organizational or structural impediments, and (3) resource limitations.

Research and practice integration is impeded by the now familiar stereotypes that some instructors have of each other and of their respective competencies. Apparently many practice instructors still think research only shows what is not effective. These instructors also perceive research as negative toward practice or uninterested in it, or they suppose that researchers are too obsessed with research design caveats to involve themselves with the inelegancies of research techniques or studies that practitioners find most useful. Some research instructors see practice instructors as being anti-intellectual--too concerned with process, values, and ideological purity to be open to empirical scrutiny. No matter how invalid, these stereotypes complicate the task of bridging the two areas.

Organizational or structural impediments to integration pertain to considerations of turf and to inadequate or competing inducements. Major curriculum changes of any sort force faculty to spend much extra time in curriculum development activities and in preparing for classes. Enthusiasm for this does not come readily unless the changes carry special incentives. This is particularly true at institutions where tenure and promotion hinge more on scholarly publications than on teaching or curriculum development. The task of gaining academic prestige often requires faculty members to have priorities that can appear to clash with the attributes necessary for integrating research and practice. Academic prestige is often associated with research that is methodologically elegant, cumulative in relation to a particular problem area, and closely tied to theory. Always doing research in collaboration with others, instead of alone, may lower one's prospects for tenure. This does not bode well for research-practitioner collaboration outside of teaching--at least to the extent that integration is enhanced by coauthorship, by a deemphasis on theoretical development and methodological rigor, and by an emphasis on immediate applicability to questions troubling practitioners. Integration can also frighten faculty because it may mean teaching something they do not understand. It may mean no longer monopolizing a particular area, but rather beginning to share in its planning with someone from an "alien" technology and perhaps having one's weaknesses exposed in either area. This arouses fears of losing prestige, self-esteem, power, or even of job security.

Even if faculty welcomed integrating practice and research, however, limitations in time and other resources often could pose problems. Team teaching sometimes cuts faculty-student ratios in half. Coordinating a practice and research class requires meetings before and during a semester, and when things do not go as planned, more time is required. Students who integrate clinical research methods with their direct practice in fieldwork may become entangled with human subjects review committees. Integration also raises basic questions about the demands of other content in social work education. If research content is added to practice courses or practice content is added to research courses, what gets traded off? Is the curriculum already overcrowded with diverse content and therefore superficial?

APPROACHES TO ACHIEVING RESEARCH-PRACTICE INTEGRATION

Getting faculty to agree to curriculum changes is rarely easy, and the barriers just enumerated are likely to make it particularly difficult to achieve an integration of practice and research curricula. It was agreed at the four conferences that the change process can be facilitated by having a strong, supportive dean; a pool of instructors, each of whom has competence and orientations in both research and practice; and access to faculty development funds.[12]

Many schools of social work, however, lack these resources insofar as they pertain to the goal of integrating research and practice. For example, they may have a strong dean, but one for whom this goal is not a high priority; or their instructors' competence may lie primarily in only one of the two areas. In such schools, implementing an integrated curriculum will require patience, persistence, and creativity. Unfortunately, conference participants were able to identify only a few tactics that they had found useful in these situations.

Theorists have identified three approaches to producing organizational change: individual, group, and structural (or informational, normative, and coercive).[13] Individual approaches seek to change organizations by changing individuals, not organizational policy or structure. This can be done through new information, training, counseling, and personnel selection and termination. Group approaches use peer group interaction and feedback to change attitudes and behavior. Structural approaches attempt to alter systemic variables, such as the division of labor, formal expectations associated with roles, decision-making processes, and reward structures. In most schools of social work, democratic decision making implies that systemic changes usually will presuppose informational or attitudinal changes among individual faculty. Therefore, although all three approaches were discussed at the conferences, the informational and normative approaches received the most attention.

An individual approach that was endorsed strongly at the conferences was the identification and dissemination of studies that are highly applicable to practice and that show what *works*, what *can* be used, not just what is ineffective. This could, for example, be in the form of annotated bibliographies of research studies pertaining to particular practice areas. The rationale was that such studies can show research faculty how research can be made useful to practice, and can show practice faculty that research exists that is useful and that builds confidence in practice. Also, such studies can be assigned readings in either research or practice courses as examples of practice-relevant research.

A group or normative approach discussed at the regional conferences was to engage research and practice instructors in dialogues that addressed their respective priorities. One idea was to identify problems of importance to practice faculty that research could address. One school had a bad experience with this approach. Because of long-standing animosities between the two groups, an attempt at dialogue resulted in each group talking at or against the other. This phase was not overcome, and the dialogue widened the schism between the two groups. To guard against this, it was suggested that care should be taken to assure that neither side in such a dialogue is seen as more scholarly, correct, or prestigious than the other side. Also suggested as a way to enhance dialogue was the tactic of making the interaction task-oriented--focusing it on formulating research projects on which pairs of research and practice faculty could collaborate as equals. A particular advantage in this strategy is that, in addition to being task-focused, it has the latent function of stimulating a potential publication for the investigators. Faculty in schools where practice instructors are feeling increased pressures to publish find this strategy particularly intriguing.[14]

For faculty who are skeptical about or impatient with achieving broad cognitive or attitudinal change among their peers, one tactic is simply "to go off in a corner as individual faculty and prepare an integrated course." This can take various forms. At one school, a practice instructor informally approached a research instructor with this idea, and the two on their own combined their respective courses through joint teaching. It is not necessary, however, to have both areas represented.

For example, the research faculty in another school redesigned the research curriculum to have more practice-relevant content and to be tracked according to student practice concentrations; they did not wait for the practice faculty to come on board. In addition to its immediate benefits, this approach can demonstrate the logic and efficacy of integration to the rest of the faculty. More important, such experiments have found that students want to take the integrated courses. Some believe that increased student demand for the innovation will be more influential in bringing about curriculum change than will all other strategies combined.

Even in schools where faculty agree to integrate practice and research, there is the problem of integrating research with practice in fieldwork agencies. As long as students continue to see fieldwork as the most important element in their professional education, the value of including that sequence in the integrative innovation is evident.[15] Programs whose curricular integration already extends to fieldwork offered a few suggestions to other conference participants:

1. Identify and select field settings that understand the utility of research and appreciate the need to include it in fieldwork.
2. Use field instructors who show the greatest interest in the instructional process.
3. Involve the field instructors as early and as much as possible in planning the entire integrative innovation, not just in the field component.
4. Gear student research projects to the information and service delivery needs of the agency, and keep the priority focused on those needs. Do not let student or pedagogical interests displace the focus on agency needs.

Doing student research projects of direct use to the fieldwork agency not only promotes agency cooperation with the integrative curriculum, but also enhances students' appreciation of research. Students see that research can have a meaningful impact on agency programs, policy, and practice. As Flynn noted, however, agency utilization of this research "is no more guaranteed than the utilization of any other resource."[16] Conference participants suggested further that these student research projects need not be complete studies in the strict sense of the term. Instead, they could be limited to particular endeavors, such as developing a management information form that ordinarily would be just one aspect of a research project.

UNRESOLVED PROBLEMS AND ISSUES

Numerous issues that require further study were identified at the conferences. Some dealt with the different research roles appropriate at different levels of practice. For example, to what extent can MSW practitioners reasonably be expected to contribute to knowledge building? What conflicts arise when the roles of researcher and practitioner are combined in one person?[17] What research content, in what depth, needs to be taught at the BSW, MSW, and doctoral levels?

The relationship between research and doubt also was discussed. It is widely believed among practice instructors that research creates doubt about the efficacy of clinical practice, but some participants suggested that such doubts exist prior to learning of research findings. Perhaps research can be taught as a way of *reducing* doubt about practice--by concentrating on findings that show what *is* effective and by giving practitioners scientific methods with which to monitor client progress. On the other hand, one practice instructor asked, "If there are so few research studies that identify effective interventions, then why all this emphasis on utilizing research findings in teaching practice?" Another responded by reasoning that a dearth of positive outcomes would create a greater need to emphasize research utilization, not a lesser need. If interventions currently in use are not effective, then it is more important to teach how to process information than to teach any particular existing models of practice. If research has already documented the effectiveness of practice, then perhaps there would be less need for teaching how to use it. It would only be necessary to teach the practice found to be effective.

Perhaps the most fitting questions about research to be raised at the conferences concerned the need to assess the outcomes of the various integrative curriculum approaches. The limited evaluative research that has been done on these approaches has had mixed results.[18] Participants noted the need to do more that just test experimental and control groups at the beginning and end of particular semesters or years. It also is necessary to look at whether students are using research methods or findings in their practice after graduation. If research is not being used, then to what extent does the problem have more to do with the dichotomy of research and practice in agencies than with any schism in education? Similarly, do the long-range benefits merit the investment of limited educational resources in integration? The profession also must be mindful of and assess the unintended consequences of integration. For example, if the integrative educational unit is just an "add-on" in one part of the total practice curriculum, then does this risk appear as just a special experience to students--implying that practice in reality usually does not have to be empirical? Also, what content would be deleted from the curriculum in an integrated approach?

IDIOGRAPHIC RESEARCH

The issue that drew the most interest in every conference concerned the uses and limitations of idiographic or single-case research. This interest parallels the recent spate of social work literature on the topic.[19] A growing number of social work educators see idiographic research as the key to integrating research and direct practice. Enthusiasm for this approach is illustrated in the following excerpt from the Introduction to a recent special issue of the *Journal of Social Service Research* that was devoted to single-system research designs:

> *We would like to emphasize our underlying consideration in all that follows: by use of single-system designs, every social worker has within his or her grasp the instruments to objectively monitor client progress throughout every case, obtaining continuous feedback that can enable workers to become truly scientific practitioners. And this is a minimum capability! Increased rigor in the application of this model can also provide information for program evaluation and information that can be added to a developing knowledge base. This is a challenge of the first order.*[20]

Proponents of single-case designs were well-represented at the conferences. Most participants tended to agree that single-case designs and group designs are compatible, and not in conflict. The same student potentially can learn both and use both. Single-case designs can provide some data, which may be better than no data, and they can accumulate to build hypotheses to be tested in group research designs, assuming sufficient dissemination vehicles and reportage of single-case studies. Reciprocally, the findings of group research can be tested in single-case studies for applicability to specific clients. Moreover, there always has been room in social research for small formative studies. Such studies have been done in the context of exploratory research, when more rigorous studies have not been feasible, and they have been reported with the appropriate caveats.

Nevertheless, many social work educators are not yet ready to embrace idiographic research as a panacea for developing their knowledge base or ending the dichotomy between research and practice. The skepticism of some is a result, in part, of their focus on macro-level practice. Despite some analogues between single-case designs and time-series approaches to program evaluation, the needs of macro-level practitioners are more in tune with nomothetic research.[21] This concerns the value of idiographic research to agencies. The informational needs of agencies relate to larger groupings and are hard to meet by assessing idiosyncratic change in each client. Many agencies, especially in the public social services, deliver resources or services that do not emphasize the kinds of clinical or behavioral changes in clients that typify the clinical assessment and monitoring emphasized in the idiographic research literature. Direct service practitioners in these agencies have their hands full just getting through the heavy daily caseload. Their agencies are not likely to create, in the forseeable future, the structures needed to support practitioner investment in single-case experiments.

On the other hand, some agencies may find idiographic research to be of value for accountability purposes. Bloom et al., for example, proposed that an agency can have practitioners do a single-case experiment with every client. It then could tally the proportion of cases in which individualized client goals were achieved--sort of an agency "batting average." Validity issues aside, agencies with good batting averages might get some mileage from this approach. It also might be possible to follow up the tally with a retrospective exploratory study that attempts to identify what distinguished the "hits" from the "outs."[22]

Macro-level instructors were not the only persons troubled by the idiographic approach to research; some micro-level practice instructors also were. Their misgivings were not based on the old misconception that single-subject designs apply only to behavioral modification. Participants seemed to understand that treatment objectives can be specified in precise behavioral terms without necessitating that treatment be behavioral. Rather, these micro-level participants were concerned about those forms of practice that do not try to change clients as much as they seek to link clients with concrete, self-evident resources.

For example, is it reasonable (or silly) to do a single-case experiment to determine whether one has secured financial assistance or alternative housing for a client? Bloom et al. argued that this makes sense--that it can build the agency batting average.[23] However, some participants remain unconvinced, maintaining that tallying the proportion of requested services or resources delivered is a far cry from single-subject experimentation. Does the child welfare caseworker really need to prove that he or she was effective in obtaining a homemaker service? At what point does this become pretentious--"researching" truisms in order to meet social workers' needs to appear profound and scientific?

More important, what latent effects might an emphasis on single-case experimentation have on orientations to practice? To what extent would such an emphasis compete with ecologically oriented concerns in teaching direct practice? If direct-service practitioners were to approach each case with the notion of doing a single-subject experiment, might there not be some tendency to think in terms of changing clients, instead of addressing the more mundane and less-prestigious tasks associated with securing basic living resources? In this connection, one participant observed that this model of research struck him as being more applicable to private clinical practice than to work with impoverished or otherwise disadvantaged clients, who typically need immediate resources rather than therapy.

To sum up, interest in idiographic research and enthusiasm for integrating research and practice flourish in a climate of caution and a sense that much more work is needed to determine where these trends are appropriate and under what conditions they are feasible. Some wonder whether each is but another passing fad--a pie-in-the-sky distraction from more rigorous scientific inquiry. As more schools evaluate the outcomes of their innovations in integrating curricula, perhaps the uncertainty will diminish.

As for now, this paper, in attempting to synthesize four regional conferences, has gone beyond regurgitating all the conference deliberations. Instead, it has filtered and developed conference themes in light of the author's judgment and reflection. Its content, therefore, should be viewed only as a springboard to further thought and discussion.

NOTES

1. See for example, Mary E. MacDonald, "The Use of Group Study in Teaching Research," *Social Service Review*, Vol. 24, No. 4 (1950), pp. 427-41; Joseph Eaton, "Symbolic and Substantive Evaluative Research," *Administrative Science Quarterly*, Vol. 6 (March 1962), pp. 42-44; Aaron Rosenblatt, "The Practitioner's Use and Evaluation of Research," *Social Work*, Vol. 13 (January 1968), pp. 53-59; Betsy-Lea Casselman, "On the Practitioner's Orientation Toward Research," *Smith College Studies in Social Work*, Vol. 42 (June 1972), pp. 211-33; Stuart A.Kirk, Michael Osmalov, and Joel Fischer, "Social Workers' Involvement in Research," *Social Work*, Vol. 21 (March 1976), pp. 121-24; and Stuart A, Kirk and Joel Fischer, "Do Social Workers Understand Research?" *Journal of Education for Social Work*, Vol. 12 (Winter 1976), pp. 63-70.

2. See for example, Scott Briar, "Toward the Integration of Practice and Research," in *Future of Social Work Research*, ed. David Fanshel (Washington, D.C.: National Association of Social Workers, 1980), pp. 31-37; and John R. Schuerman, "On Research and Practice Teaching in Social Work," in *Sourcebook on Research Utilization*, ed. Allen Rubin and Aaron Rosenblatt (New York: Council on Social Work Education, 1979), pp. 143-49.

3. Samuel Mencher, *The Research Method in Social Work Education: Social Work Curriculum Study*, Vol. 9 (New York: Council on Social Work Education, 1959); and Council on Social Work Education, "Task Force Report on Research in the MSW Curriculum," *Social Work Education Reporter*, Vol. 16 (March 1968), pp. 13, 20-21.

4. Allen Rubin and Sidney E. Zimbalist, *Trends in the MSW Research Curriculum: A Decade Later* (New York: Council on Social Work Education, 1979).

5. Most of the approaches are described in separate articles appearing in *Teaching Social Work Research: Alternative Programs and Strategies*, edited by Robert W. Weinbach and Allen Rubin (New York: Council on Social Work Education, 1980). See also Irwin Epstein and Tony Tripodi, "Incorporating

Research into Macro Social Work Practice and Education," in Rubin and Rosenblatt, *op. cit.*, pp. 121-31.

6. See for example, Scott Briar, "Incorporating Research into Education for Clinical Practice in Social Work: Toward a Clinical Science in Social Work," in Rubin and Rosenblatt, *op. cit.*, pp. 132-40.

7. Joel Fischer and Walter Hudson, "Increasing the Relevance of Research Education: The University of Hawaii Research Program," in Weinbach and Rubin, *op. cit.*, pp. 23-29.

8. Katherine M. Wood, "Experience in Teaching the Practitioner-Researcher Model," in Weinbach and Rubin, *op. cit.*, pp. 13-22.

9. See for example, Naomi Gottlieb and Cheryl Richey, "Education of Human Services Practitioners for Clinical Evaluation," in Weinbach and Rubin, *op. cit.*, pp. 3-12; and Joshua Cohen, "Teaching Research in Mental Health as an Integral Part of Class and Field: Principles and Experiences from a Generalist Program " (Paper presented at the Annual Program Meeting of the Council on Social Work Education, Boston, March 1979).

10. Edward J. Mullen et al., "Toward an Integration of Research and Practice in the Social Work Curriculum: A Description and Evaluation of a One-Quarter Course," in Weinbach and Rubin, *op. cit.*, pp. 30-41.

11. Epstein and Tripodi, *op. cit.*

12. For an example of how faculty development funds can be used to bridge research and practice through collaborative research projects, see Camille Lambert, "Helping Networks and Social Service Systems," Progress Report and Research Plan (Toronto, Canada: University of Toronto, Faculty of Social Work, December 1977).

13. Daniel Katz and Robert L. Kahn, *The Social Psychology of Organizations* (New York: John Wiley and Sons, 1978).

14. See for example, Lambert, *op. cit.*

15. For a recent study of student perceptions of the importance of fieldwork, see Allen Rubin, *Community Mental Health in the Social Work Curriculum* (New York: Council on Social Work Education, 1979).

16. John P. Flynn, "Integrating Curriculum and Community Goals through Action Research" (Paper presented at Workshop on Integrating Practice and Research, sponsored by the Council on Social Work Education, Austin, Texas, February 1980).

17. Edwin J. Thomas, "Research and Service in Single-Case Experimentation: Conflicts and Choices," *Social Work Research and Abstracts*, Vol. 14 (Winter 1978), pp. 20-31.

18. See for example, Michael S. Kolevzon, "Integrational Teaching Modalities in Social Work Education: Promise or Pretence?" *Journal of Education for Social Work*, Vol. 11 (Spring 1975), pp. 60-67; and Wallace J. Gingerich, "The Evaluation of Clinical Practice: A Graduate Level Course," *Journal of Social*

Welfare, Vol. 4 (Winter 1977), pp. 109-18.

19. See for example, *Social Work Research and Abstracts*, Vol. 14 (Winter 1978); *Journal of Social Service Research*, Vol. 3 (Fall 1979); and Srinika Jayaratne and Rona L. Levy, *Empirical Clinical Practice* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1979).

20. *Journal of Social Service Research*, Vol. 3 (Fall 1979), Introduction, pp. 5-6.

21. Tony Tripodi and Janice Harrington, "Use of Time-Series Designs for Formative Program Evaluation," *Journal of Social Service Research*, Vol. 3 (Fall 1979), pp. 67-78.

22. Martin Bloom et al., "Evaluation of Single Intervention," *Journal of Social Service Research*, Vol. 2 (Spring 1979), pp. 301-10.

23. *Ibid.*

7

TEACHING QUALITATIVE RESEARCH METHODS

HAROLD H. WEISSMAN

In some measure, this article on the roundtable discussion on Teaching Qualitative Research Methods represents a minority report to the Conference on Research Utilization in Social Work Education. It is a minority report not in the sense of disagreement with the majority report, but rather as a corrective to two significant concerns that have been obscured in the other articles and general discussions emanating from the conference.

The first concern is that the agency in social welfare is the general locus of research. It is the agency that decides what research shall take place, where it shall take place, when it shall take place, and if it shall take place. A research effort that focuses on educating and training social work practitioners in the skills and techniques of experimental research must inevitably depend on agencies to define jobs for practitioners in which they can utilize their experimental research skills.

The fact is that agencies do not define practitioners' jobs as research jobs in which they are able to carry out experimental research. Thus the research skills imparted to caseworkers, groupworkers, and community organizers must in the main not be utilized, although increased use of single-subject designs may alter this situation.

A second and related problem is whether experimental technologies and methodologies are really suitable for agency-based research. The essence of the classical research design is the control group, yet in the actual operation of social programs it is difficult to establish control groups. First, there is the problem of denying service to certain elements of the population that might need it. Second, there is the practical problem of randomization, so that those who receive service and those who do not are similar. Third, there are problems in maintaining confidentiality and control over the subjects so that those in the experimental group do not influence those in the control group and vice versa. Lastly there is a natural desire of program staff to alter their approach when they realize changes need to be made, no matter what the canons of research may call for.

THE CONTEXT OF RESEARCH

Chommie and Hudson made the point that the context of research must be given as much weight as the canons of research.[1] What has been discovered in relation to a variety of fields of practice, from child welfare to drug addiction--that differential treatment is required for different types of clients--has been discovered for research. There is no one ideal design or methodology of research that will fit every situation. Chommie and Hudson noted that the information needs of policymakers and funding agencies may require an outcome-focused strategy that attempts to verify through measurement the relationship between the program and its specified outcomes or effects. However, such information concerning program success often arrives too late to serve the immediate needs of program administrators, clients, and staff.[2]

Both qualitative and quantitative methods are required to satisfy these equally legitimate needs. Yet the need for timely information has most often not been met by researchers.

If research is to be an aid in promoting better management--and if it does not attempt to do this, it will not find a place in agencies--certain policies and procedures must be clearly articulated:

1. *Researchers, staff, and administration must agree on the purposes and potential consequences of the research prior to its being initiated.*
2. *Research should not begin until indices of success and goal attainment are adequately described. There is nothing more devastating to programs than evaluation showing that clients are neither better off or worse off for having been involved in the program. While such results may often be true, at other time inadequate attention to the validity of the indices causes the erroneous view that results were poor.*
3. *An overemphasis on the desire to establish scientific proof, when the requisites, both intellectual and organizational, are not present, must be avoided. The mere fact that one cannot establish cause and effect does not mean that it is valueless to gather information systematically, in order that program judgements may be based on the best available information.*
4. *It is absolutely essential that the impact model implicit in any social program be completely explicated; that is, how in fact the program is to achieve its desired ends. For example, if a counseling program and a work training program are designed to help an adolescent prepare for return to his or her natural parents, how does this occur? What are the exact connections between changes of attitude, behavior, and program? It is crucial to know where in this sequence of activities the breakdown occurs, if there is to be any improvement in the program.*
5. *Research must be concerned not only with the verification of facts or knowledge, but also must be concerned with the development of knowledge. Evaluation must provide operating staff with information not only about how well or poorly they are doing their job, but much more significantly, with information that will offer guidance on how they can improve their work.*[3]

Qualitative techniques are important to developing indices of success, specifying impact models, and describing process. If there was a preamble to the roundtable, it was that as long as social work continues to train its practitioners solely with experimental methods, then not much research will be done in agencies, and what is done will inevitable by concerned mainly with verification of facts rather than the generation of knowledge.

KNOWLEDGE DEVELOPMENT

Thomas made the point that technological innovations in social welfare derive from many other sources than basic or applied research.[4] He listed the transfer of technology from other fields, realizations of values and ideology, interpretations of legal policies, and experiential syntheses of practice and experience. These sources of innovation depend on processes and procedures quite different from the classical scientific method. By training social work students in only one set of knowledge-generating techniques, the classic goal-displacement inadvertently has been set up. Problems are studied that fit the methodology rather than methodologies selected to fit the requirements and needs of solving the problems.

Britan pointed out that contextual or qualitative evaluations and experimental approaches not only utilize different kinds of data, but also provide alternative kinds of frameworks for understanding. Quantitative evaluation provides decision makers with a precise basis for choosing among program alternatives. Yet since experimental evaluations tend to ignore the details of treatment implementation, they provide little formative feedback for the development of program improvements. This is precisely the strong point of qualitative studies.[5]

Qualitative and quantitative studies are not necessarily antagonistic. More likely they are necessary complements. Qualitative research can define measurable results for later experimental assessment, just as experimentation can test specific propositions in the framework of a broader context.

Britan created a typology of program situations in which one or the other or a combination are best suited:

1. Narrow goals, clear theory, specific results. *This type of program nearly approximates a laboratory ideal, and is therefore the most appropriate for experimental assessment; i.e., when a public health program is testing the efficacy of a new vaccine. Supplementary contextual research might also be used to verify treatment occurrence, elicit alternative goals, or assess unintended results.*
2. Broad goals, fuzzy theory, diffuse results. *Focusing on discrete causes and effects makes little sense when program operation is so poorly understood. When evaluating a community mental health center, for example, a researcher faces multiple goals, diverse understandings, varied treatments and results that range from changes in individual psychology to overall effects on entire neighborhoods. A detailed examination of program context explains how these and other factors interrelate in an ongoing program process. This would not, of course, preclude the use of later experimental validation if clear definition is needed for logical inference.*
3. Broad goals, clear theory, specific results. *School breakfast programs seek to promote broad changes in health, emotional adjustment and aca-*

> *demic adjustment of students. Before experimental research can proceed, these broad formal and informal goals must be better defined. Once this is done, actual results, such as declining illness rates, can be experimentally verified. The reasons why some expected effects do not occur would be a subject for contextual study.*[6]

EPISTEMOLOGICAL CONFLICTS

One reason for the seeming conflict between qualitative and quantitative methods of research lies in differences about the nature of social meaning. In the main, social scientists in America, following Emile Durkheim, were concerned about social facts, the characteristics of groups of individuals that are viewed as external to individuals and as constraining them. Structuralists or positivists use the simple physical analogy:

> *People are treated as social atoms, while the social system is seen as the matter composed of these atoms. On the atomic or molecular level, there are only collections of these particles moving in any and all directions. But if one looks at the whole instead of its millions of parts, an entirely new world in its order appears. Thus, just as simple laws governing the behavior of gases can be found without reference to the behavior of individual molecules that made them up, why could not the same be done for society as well?*[7]

From this point of view, sociology is an attempt to discover the laws that constrain individual behavior. The behavior of individuals is not so much what a person thinks or feels about a situation, but is accounted for by the structural factors in an organization or society that constrain an individual's actions.

Thus society's common economic systems, networks of relationships, and flows of population exist as things with a life and structure of their own. In fact, they seem to exist somewhat independently of the individuals comprising them. This way of thinking and talking about the relationship between individuals and society came to be known in sociology as "structuralism."

Posed against this point of view is one that derives more from Max Weber. He contended that there was a possibility that social meanings which direct human behavior do not inhere in activities, institutions, or social objects themselves. Rather, meanings are conferred on social events by interacting individuals who must first interpret what is going on from the social context in which these events occur.

> *This emerging Gestalt [the definition of the situation], is seen to result from the interplay of biography, situation, non-verbal communication, and linguistic exchange that characterizes all social interaction. From this point of view, it is important for the researcher to understand the meaning of activities to participants and to understand the patterns amongst these meanings of interrelated participants.*[8]

This came to be known as the symbolic interactionist view of knowledge because it attempts to get at the meaning of action.[9] Understanding the meanings of actions and situations is valuable for social workers because they work directly with people who are constantly responding to social work techniques. Social workers require operable variables that take the client's response into account, whether the variable relates to a way of helping or advocating for clients or merely offers an understanding what the potential levers of change might be.

A great deal of positivist or structuralist thinking is not useful for social workers. After a community organizer knows that the characteristics of participants in community councils represent x educational level, x income level, x commitment to an ethnic group, and so on, the worker must either recruit people who have these characteristics or close down the organization if people with these characteristics are unavailable or are already committed to other organizations. Thus such structuralist concepts are not useful because one cannot change a person quickly enough to create a certain educational or income level in time to keep an organization alive.

The types of problems that social workers have to deal with, whether they are working with groups or individuals, often require knowledge that, to date, can only be developed through qualitative methods. Whether this knowledge is only half-verified or tenative is not the issue. First one must have an idea before one can either verify or validate it.

TEACHING QUALITATIVE METHODS

In his presentation to the roundtable, John Conte stated that students require knowledge of both qualitative and quantative methods. For him, the profession has had too long-standing a love affair with quantitative technology. This occurred primarily because of the desire to develop a scientific base and probably also grew out of a desire to be accepted into the academic community, which has given strong support to experimental research and to the attempt to found a social science.

Roy Ruckdeschel and other discussants at the roundtable defined qualitative methods as participant observation, ethnomethodology, field studies, process analysis, and a variety of nonreactive techniques for studying groups and individuals. These methodologies were seen as practicable for individual practitioners because they do not require large samples or even agency sanction. They have the further advantage of helping students learn what they wish to learn; that is, what the effects of their interventions are and what various actions mean to clients.

Suzanne Osterbusch made the point that information is the energy for practice. The important thing for practitioners is not that they prove something, but that they discover something. Qualitative methodology is the methodology of discovery most suited for individual practitioners--most suited for discovery, for developing ideas, rather than for verifying them.

Diane Brannon made the point that social work practitioners are closer to human problems than any other group of professionals. Anthropologists, sociologists, and other social scientists would give their eyeteeth to have the access that social workers have. She pointed out that it is important for individual practitioners to forego clean measurement for complicated understanding. The level of understanding and knowledge of much social work practice is at a point where this is a necessity.

Brannon also contended that since social workers are already involved in service and in dealing with social problems, their presence is not as disruptive as that of formal researchers. Because practice, like the processes research examines, goes on over time, practitioners are well-situated for doing research.

Even the nonjudgmental and empathic values and techniques of the practitioner are similar to the values required of a qualitative researcher.

In the same vein, James Taylor contended that (1) the insights and principles important to social work practice have tended to come from the naturalistic research tradition and not from the positivistic one, and (2) the methods of naturalistic research call upon skills and concepts inculcated by social work training. Thus naturalistic research comes as a reasonable extension of the social work student's interests and abilities, not as an alien body of stuff imported from the laboratory.

Taylor made the additional point that the courses in human behavior offered in most schools of social work could be enlivened by teaching techniques of compiling ethnographic and life histories as means of discovery about clients. These techniques lend themselves to integration with such courses. Taylor further contended that the real dilemma is how to switch teachers socialized into quantitative methodology and quantitative empirical frames of reference to the qualitative.

Judith Nelsen concluded the roundtable by noting that outcome research may not be suited to capture the complexity of social work process. Nevertheless, process research is difficult and requires a great deal more development and experimentation. It is no easy matter to develop indices from process or to demarcate variables that explicate goals.

Nevertheless, qualitative research has a variety of potential uses for students. Because the focus in process research is on behavior rather than on diagnostic language, it can both help social work students improve their recording and provide a better framework for integrating theory with practice.

The exact relation of qualitative to quantitative methods is still a subject of considerable dispute. Is there not a great deal of overlap in the skills required for each? Can qualitative methods be utilized to verify knowledge or are qualitative methods best seen as tools for necessary homework tnat must be done before experimental methods can be utilized? Or are there different mixes and matches for particular types of problems that do not relate to the supposed rigor of one or lack of rigor of the other?

Whatever the answers to these questions, as long as social work ties itself to the experimental method, to quantitative techniques, it will miss the opportunity to socialize thousands of practitioners into the possibilities of doing research as a means of improving their practice. Also, it will considerably limit its ability as a profession to develop the knowledge and techniques that are sorely needed to provide more effective service to clients.

NOTES

1. Peter Chommie and Joe Hudson, "Evaluation of Outcome and Process," *Social Work*, Vol. 19 (November 1974), pp. 682-87.

2. *Ibid.*, p. 687.

3. See Harold H. Weissman, "Clients, Staff, and Researchers: Their Role in Management Information Systems," *Administration in Social Work,* Vol. 1 (1977), p. 47.

4. Edwin J. Thomas, "Beyond Knowledge Utilization in Generating Human Service Technology," in *Future of Social Work Research,* ed. David Fanshel (Washington, D.C.: National Association of Social Workers, 1980), pp. 91-103.

5. Gerald Britan, "Experimental and Contextual Models of Program Evaluation," *Evaluation and Program Planning,* Vol. 1, No. 3 (1978), p. 230.

6. *Ibid.,* p. 232.

7. Howard Schwartz and Jerry Jacobs, *Qualitative Sociology* (New York: The Free Press, 1979), p. 13.

8. For a discussion, see *ibid.,* pp. 7-10.

9. For a full analysis of symbolic interaction see "Symbolic Interaction and Social Welfare," *Journal of Sociology and Social Welfare,* special issue, Vol. 6 (January 1979).

8

PROJECT RECOMMENDATIONS

KAY L. DEA

The purposes of this article are to identify, discuss, and prioritize approaches to enhancing research utilization in social work education and practice. The concept of utilization implies that both the systematic procedures of research and the findings obtained through research are used to inform and guide practice and education. Consequently, this article is concerned with potential strategies both for integrating research methods and procedures into education and practice and for assuring that research data and findings influence program development and practice technique.

The need for enhanced research utilization has been documented in the social work literature. In 1968 Rosenblatt reported that caseworkers valued personal consultation and supervision more than the use of research findings in developing treatment plans for practice. He concluded that practitioners must strengthen their commitment "to support research, to cooperate with researchers, and to pay attention to research findings."[1] During the past decade, the profession has been charged repeatedly with the need to develop and utilize enhanced scientific procedures to document the need for social services, demonstrate the effectiveness of services, and certify accountability in program and fiscal management.[2] Likewise, researchers have acknowledged the need to share responsibility with practitioners in assessing the potential application of research information to practice, including the development of better systems to communicate research findings and facilitate research utilization.[3]

This interest in strengthening research utilization may be attributed to a number of factors. Most important has been the pressure exerted by government agencies, and by the public in general, for improved accountability and cost effectiveness in service programs. Proposition 13 in California and the related tax reform programs sweeping America can only intensify this pressure as social service agencies compete for scarce resources.

Developments in the profession also have contributed to the need for sophisticated research utilization. For example, during the past decade the growth of baccalaureate social work education and practice has confronted the profession with a variety of issues concerning the differential deployment of personnel. Data are needed to determine how personnel at the baccalaureate and master's levels are being deployed, to identify the competencies related to role assignments, and to assess worker performance in these role assignments. Of related interest in terms of research utilization is the need to identify the research skills necessary for effective practice at each level.

Similar needs must be addressed as the profession moves to credential practice specializations. Unless the profession can build into the emerging specializations a research orientation capable of assuring the systematic study of practice by researcher-practitioners, there is little chance that the specializations will enhance social work practice significantly. Research must be an integral part of professional specialization. The generation and utilization of empirical data in support of practice techniques must be the hallmark of professional practice.

Another major factor contributing to the need for improved research utilization is the proliferation of new human service technologies and disciplines that has occurred over the past ten years. Increasingly, these disciplines are competing with social work for the right to deliver social services. Job declassification has become a major concern to the profession as human service technologists and other professional groups challenge social work to produce empirical evidence to support the profession's claim to exclusive or primary role assignments in selected community services.

As outlined in other sections of this book, the profession has begun to respond to these demands. Research is receiving increased attention in the social work profession. In Chapter 4, for example, Kirk and Rosenblatt cite the emergence of two new research journals, an increase in journal articles devoted to research, and attempts at many schools of social work to integrate practice and research within social work education as healthy signs that the profession is beginning to upgrade research programs. In Chapter 5, Weinbach summarizes a variety of educational approaches that have been developed to enhance student preparation in research. He concludes that whether the focus is on producing practitioners who do research or on training practitioners who understand and use the research of others, the implicit assumption is that practice without a research base and research without practice utilization are equally valueless.

Although the developments cited by Kirk, Rosenblatt, and Weinbach are promising, their impact on professional practice has been minimal. To a large extent, they represent a series of individual, fragmented efforts to upgrade research, rather than a coordinated professional plan for enhanced research utilization. There is a continuing need in the profession for a central organization to coordinate activities and programs designed to enhance research production and utilization. There is a need to identify and address systematically those factors that impede research production in social work and to translate research findings into practice technique. It was to these objectives in part, that the Council on Social Work Education (CSWE) Project on Research Utilization in Social Work Education was addressed.

The following impediments to research utilization were identified frequently by project participants.

THE ASSIGNMENT OF LOW PRIORITY TO RESEARCH ACTIVITIES ON THE PART OF SOCIAL WORK PRACTITIONERS AND EDUCATORS

Reference has been made already to Rosenblatt's study concerning the research orientation of caseworkers. Further evidence of the low priority assigned to research has been documented by Kirk, Osmalov, and Fischer in their article, "Social Workers' Involvement in Research."[4] Given these studies, it appears that few social work practitioners conduct research or read and utilize research findings. In fact, it appears that most social workers disdain and avoid research in any form. To what extent this is a result of the personality types who choose social work or of the education and socialization processes utilized to prepare individuals for social work practice is unknown. It is likely, however, that both are critical variables in contributing to the low research production of the profession.

Additional evidence of the low priority assigned to research is the lack of specificity concerning research content and requirements for accreditation found in CSWE's current Curriculum Policy Statement and accreditation standards. In accord with this lack of specificity, there is evidence that graduate education programs have moved away from requiring formal theses and more rigorous research requirements to focus student attention on introductory, consumer-oriented objectives. It is interesting to note in relation to this development that prior to 1968 CSWE required the completion of a thesis or a group research project for accreditation of graduate programs. In *Trends in the MSW Curriculum: A Decade Later,* Rubin and Zimbalist traced developments in the MSW research curriculum since this standard was deleted. They recommended that their findings be considered by CSWE in the development of a new Curriculum Policy Statement.[5]

THE DEVELOPMENT OF A DICHOTOMY BETWEEN RESEARCH AND PRACTICE

The profession has tended to classify research and practice activities into separate career lines. This dichotomy has resulted in practice models that place responsibility for research on a relatively few specialists rather than on the total profession. Frequently these specialists are isolated from the front lines of practice where critical problems related to the delivery of services must be addressed. Briar suggested that the profession must close this gap between research and practice. He proposed that research content be taught within the context of practice courses in an effort to develop clinical scientists who can combine clinical and research responsibilities.[6]

THE STATUS OF RESEARCH SKILLS HELD BY CURRENT PRACTITIONERS AND EDUCATORS

It appears that research utilization is hampered by a lack of research sophistication in the majority of individuals responsible for social work education and practice. Given the low priority on research that has existed historically in the profession, and the dichotomy between research and practice that exists today, it is not surprising that most social workers have limited skills in research. If the profession is to make major strides in upgrading research utilization, attention must be given to the development and enhancement of research skills in those individuals currently employed in professional activities.

THE LACK OF CONCEPTUAL MODELS TO INTEGRATE RESEARCH AND PRACTICE

Research utilization cannot be expected to occur spontaneously. It requires the development of support systems to assure that appropriate issues and problems are the focus of systematic study, that the findings of research projects are disseminated to significant individuals and groups, and that research findings are assessed critically and applied to practice. Currently there appear to be few support systems in the profession to provide these services.

PROJECT RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations were developed by project members to address the four major problems outlined. It is suggested that they be implemented as rapidly as possible to enhance research utilization in practice and education.

Activities Recommended to Assure That Greater Priority Is Given to Research Utilization by Professional Organizations and Agencies

It is recommended that CSWE establish a permanent research division responsible for the following activities:

1. To assume an advocacy role in stimulating research and in developing resources to support research activities in education and practice.
2. To provide research consultation and assistance as needed to support special grant and other project activities of the Council, selected research activities of constituent members, and technical assessment of research design and analysis in materials considered for CSWE publications.
3. To assist in the compilation and dissemination of research findings significant for social work education and practice.
4. To collect annual statistics and other data necessary for ongoing program planning and to collect special data necessary for the development of experimental and innovative projects in social work education.
5. To conduct special research projects in social work education.
6. To cooperate with other national agencies in coordinating activities and special projects to enhance research utilization.

High priority should be given to the establishment of this division. This article and others in this volume have noted the lack of central planning and coordination that exist in relation to projects designed to enhance research utilization. A research division at CSWE could help fill this void. In addition, a research division could provide support services for the various commissions and committees responsible for Council activities, and meaningful services to constituent groups.

It is recommended that CSWE revise its Curriculum Policy Statement and accreditation standards and guidelines to increase the emphasis on research in both baccalaureate and master's programs.

Programs designed to upgrade research production in the profession and the eventual application of research findings to practice must include activities to assure that individuals preparing for professional careers acquire positive attitudes toward research, a commitment to foster and to utilize research in support of practice, and appropriate research skills for practice. Current standards for accreditation provide little assurance that students enrolled in social work programs will receive any common preparation for the assumption of research responsibilities. The Curriculum Policy Statement does not provide guidelines for content to be included in a research curriculum. There is no statement to clarify the differential research roles and responsibilities for which BSW, MSW, and DSW students should be prepared. Finally, there are no guidelines concerning the structuring of research content to assure curriculum integration in support of expected student educational outcomes.

Attention should be given to assure greater specificity in future policy statements, standards, and guidelines. For example, a curriculum policy statement should acknowledge the responsibility of educational programs to prepare students at all levels to assess the outcome of their professional services. It should require that research be taught as an integral part of all social work practice; and it should assure that graduate programs provide students with the skills necessary to participate in the generation of formal research projects as well as the consumption and application of research findings. Consideration should be given to the reenactment of a formal requirement that graduate students complete a thesis or research project for a graduate degree.

It is critical that the profession define the research skills needed at each level of practice and the research content that must be presented at each level of education to ensure the integrity of the research curriculum. There is little hope of upgrading research utilization in social work without upgrading student preparation for research activities in practice. The profession must affirm its commitment to enhance research utilization by granting greater visibility and importance to the research curriculum in accreditation.

It is recommended that the National Association of Social Workers (NASW) and other bodies concerned with the regulation of social work practice give more emphasis to research competency in ACSW and other licensing examinations.

If it is to upgrade research utilization, the profession must assure through licensing and other regulatory procedures that newly credentialed practitioners have appropriate research skills to perform the research activities associated with clinical and community practice. At the minimum, practitioners should be expected to have research skills adequate to assess their own practice and the ability to understand and assess research findings. Ideally, they should be equipped to assist in the development and implementation of formal research projects. It is suggested that the profession demonstrate its commitment to upgrading research utilization by assuring that research skills are required for professional certification and licensing.

It is recommended that CSWE, NASW, and other national organizations establish special awards to recognize individuals and groups for the creative use of research in support of practice and education and for outstanding research production.

Special research awards can be tangible symbols of the importance attached to research production and utilization. In addition, they can stimulate interest in research activities. Project members concluded that the development of truly prestigious awards could provide incentives for research production, increase the recognition for outstanding accomplishments in research utilization, and enhance the visibility of professional research activities.

Activities Recommended to Reduce the Dichotomy between Practice and Research

It is recommended that educational programs be structured to facilitate integration between research content and practice theory. Consideration should be given to the following types of activities to facilitate this integration:

1. The development of new curriculum structures to facilitate the teaching of research and practice within the same courses and sequences.
2. The mandatory incorporation of research projects or activities into practice-oriented seminars.
3. The systematic review, evaluation, and application of empirical data related to practice methodologies in each practice course.
4. The development of special agency-based research field experiences in conjunction with research and/or practice courses.
5. The development of required research activities in conjunction with fieldwork placements.

Each school must develop a curriculum uniquely designed to capitalize on the resources available in the context of its own university and to achieve the program objectives specific to social work. Consequently, it is not recommended that mandatory patterns for curriculum integration be specified.

It is recommended that educational programs and practice agencies develop consortial arrangements to facilitate cooperative research activities, including opportunities for faculty and staff exchanges.

The attendance at national meetings which focus specifically on social work research suggests that individuals who identify themselves as researchers work primarily in academic settings. Consequently, consortial research arrangements between practice and education may be fruitful in reducing the dichotomy that has existed between practice and research. Certainly, cooperative projects and faculty-staff exchanges have potential for enhancing both education and practice. Stronger linkages between education and practice may increase the relevancy of academic research to practice issues and problems.

Activities Recommended to Upgrade the Research Skills of Current Practitioners and Educators

It is recommended that educational programs work cooperatively with community agencies to specify the research responsibilities of personnel employed in practice and to identify the areas in which these individuals need additional research training.

It is recommended that educational programs cooperate with community agencies in the support of staff development through the maintenance of continuing education programs, special classes, workshops, and institutes related to research utilization.

These two recommendations must be considered together. Given the resistance that social workers frequently demonstrate toward research, any effort to upgrade the research skills of practitioners must provide incentives for their participation in staff development. Incentives are more likely to be achieved if the educational programs are related specifically to the particular work responsibilities of practitioners.

It is recommended that educational institutions establish faculty development programs in support of research utilization.

Social work practitioners are not alone in their need for expanded research knowledge and skills to support their professional activities. Many social work educators do not have the skills necessary to utilize research in social work education and to teach students how to utilize research in practice. It is recommended that educational institutions, in considering requests for sabbatical leave and special funding for faculty activities, give priority to activities and proposals that emphasize the development of research skills. Schools should develop ongoing programs in faculty development to upgrade research skills and to inform faculty of research findings. Special support systems should be developed to assist faculty in the development of research projects and to inform faculty of research opportunities.

Activities Recommended to Support the Assessment, Dissemination, and Application of Research Findings to Practice

A number of the recommendations in other sections of this article call for the creation of systems to support research utilization. The development of a research division within CSWE and the use of awards to recognize outstanding achievements in research production, for example, could result in formal programs to assist in assessing and disseminating research findings. In addition to the recommendations outlined in other sections, the following activities are presented for consideration.

It is recommended that the Annual Program Meeting of CSWE and other national forums incorporate permanent structures to facilitate a systematic review of major research developments and the consideration of research issues and emerging research technology.

Currently there are no regular meetings designed to address the special problems and issues related to social work research. It is important that some structure be devised to provide opportunities for this activity. One of the major objectives of the Annual Program Meeting should be the dissemination and evaluation of research findings.

It is recommended that CSWE and other national organizations periodically commission individuals to develop journal articles and other reports which review research and update knowledge in specific areas of practice and education.

Since the development of knowledge in social work as in other fields is incremental, and since the number of professional journals in social work and related fields is vast, it is evident that few individuals have the time or resources to review comprehensively the research and theoretical developments associated with different fields of social work practice. Research utilization can be supported through the periodic publication of comprehensive reviews of research.

NOTES

1. Aaron Rosenblatt, "The Practitioner's Use and Evaluation of Research," *Social Work,* Vol. 13 (January 1968), p. 59.

2. See for example, Scott Briar, "Effective Social Work Interventions in Direct Practice: Implications for Education," in *Facing the Challenge* (New York: Council on Social Work Education, 1973).

3. See for example, Tony Tripodi, *Uses and Abuses of Social Research in Social Work* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1974).

4. Stuart A. Kirk, Michael J. Osmalov, and Joel Fischer, "Social Workers' Involvement in Research," *Social Work,* Vol. 21 (March 1976), pp. 121-24.

5. Allen Rubin and Sidney E. Zimablist, *Trends in the MSW Research Curriculum: A Decade Later* (New York: Council on Social Work Education, 1979).

6. Briar, *op. cit.*